

C E L E S T I N A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

CELESTINA.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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CELESTINA.

CHAPTER I.

AT the end of a week, Celestina, with Mrs. Elphinstone and her children, were arrived at the small village of Kirby Thorn, where, as the youngest of the little boys had appeared the preceding day to droop, his mother determined to pass the night. Celestina, who saw her friend greatly alarmed by the indisposition of the child, endeavoured to appease her fears by imputing it to the fatigue and heat of their journey. But the terrified mother saw every moment new grounds for her apprehensions, and the next day the child was evidently much

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worse. Four-and-twenty hours more passed in painful solicitude, and then Mrs. Elphinstone knew that it was the measles; and became much easier, though the eldest boy had every symptom of having taken the same disorder.

Mrs. Elphinstone never left her children a moment; and Celestina, with the tenderest solicitude, assisted her. The elder boy was of a sanguine and irritable constitution, and the eruptive fever ran high; while the situation they were in, at a little inn, where the servants and children of the house had not had the distemper, was rendered extremely uncomfortable by the fears of its other inhabitants—the murmurs of the landlady and the reluctance of the servants.

Celestina, with that cheerful benignity, which was on all occasions ready for the service of the distressed, now acted for her friend almost the part of a servant; and in her frequent visits to the kitchen for what was wanted in the sick room, she saw three
servants,

servants, a postilion and two footmen, and observed that they seemed fixed there, and were not at present travelling. The men were remarkably well behaved, and observing the discontent of the people of the inn, had more than once offered to go out for her on any messages she might have occasion to send.

The mind of Celestina was, however, too much occupied by the little invalids to suffer her curiosity to be awakened by this circumstance; and she never enquired to whom these servants, nor a very plain, but fashionable post-chaise, about which she saw them sometimes busied, belonged. The children were in the height of the distemper, and the anxious mother and Celestina entirely occupied about them, when a very decent person, about fifty, who had the look of a housekeeper to some person of fashion, came to the door of their room, which was left open for the sake of air, and asking permission to come in, told them, that her lady, Lady Horatia Howard, had

ordered her to wait on them to enquire if her servants, or any thing in her power could contribute to the ease of the children, or the ladies to whom they belonged.

Mrs Elphinstone returned a proper answer to this very polite and humane message; and after the person who had delivered it was withdrawn, Celestina pausing a moment, said that she recollected the name of Lady Horatia Howard, and that she was one of the friends most esteemed among the numerous acquaintance cultivated by Mrs. Willoughby.

It was now debated between them whether, after so obliging a message, Celestina should not make herself known to Lady Horatia: Mrs. Elphinstone was inclined to think she ought; but Celestina seemed rather disposed to avoid it.—“It is true,” said she, “that I recollect my dear Mrs. Willoughby to have been very partial to her, but it is probable that she has long since forgotten me, and that I shall be exposed to the disagreeable necessity of announcing

nouncing myself, and recalling to her mind circumstances which I cannot remember but with pain. Perhaps, too, she may know the strange occurrences which have since happened; and though I remember her conversation to have been very refined and elegant, perhaps she may expect, if she honours me with her notice, that I should prove myself worthy of it, by relating all that has happened; for who knows in what light the Castlenorth's may have represented my conduct. I am unequal to all this, I fear; and unless to avail myself of our former acquaintance will be of any use to you, my dear Mrs. Elphinstone, I shall not, for my own sake only, endeavour to renew it."

In a few hours afterwards, however, Lady Horatia, who had heard from her servant of the fine form and amiable manners of the young person who was so attentive to the sick children, contrived to have a door left open by which she must pass; and seeing her, immediately knew her. On her

return into the room therefore, Lady Horatia sent her woman again, with her compliments, begging to know if the name of one of the ladies was not De Mornay, and if it was, requesting the favour of speaking to her.

Celestina could not now decline going; and following the messenger, was shewn into a room where Lady Horatia sat alone.

"Pardon me, dear Miss De Mornay," cried she, the moment she entered, "if instead of waiting on you, I request to see you here. The truth is, I am foolishly affected by the sight of illness. That which has attacked your little friends, is not, however, I hope, dangerous?"

Celestina, who by the freedom and kindness of this address was immediately relieved from some little uneasiness which she had felt from this unexpected interview, answered with all her usual ease and grace; and Lady Horatia, who seemed extremely pleased with having met her, enquired after Lady Molyneux, and such other of their
former

former friends, as she thought would renew no unpleasing recollections: for though she did not know all that had happened, she was well aware how cruel a blow the death of Mrs. Willoughby had been to Celestina, and had heard some confused reports that the marriage of Willoughby and Miss Fitz-Hayman was interrupted by his prior attachment to his mother's ward; but she knew not how far Celestina had been preferred to the haughty heiress; and though she had always a partial kindness to her when she used to meet her at Mrs. Willoughby's, she had lost sight of her entirely afterwards, and, after some enquiries, concluded she was gone back to France.

The sight of her now, at a remote inn in the North, was as agreeable as it was unexpected; and though the difference of their ages seemed to preclude any great degree of intimacy before, for Lady Horatia was passed the middle of life, yet now she felt herself strongly disposed to cultivate a pleasure

sure thus thrown in her way. Celestina could not be insensible of the honour she derived from the notice of a person more eminent for her goodness and her talents than her birth or her fortune, and always pleasing, she grew infinitely more so where she desired to please. In a few hours, therefore, they became so happy with each other, that Lady Horatia could not part with her but with regret; and Celestina would have left her with reluctance on any other occasion than to attend the children of her friend (which, during her absence, Mrs. Hemmings, Lady Horatia's woman, had done, with an attention that prevented Mrs. Elphinstone's suffering from the engagement of Celestina with her lady).

The children became better, and their mother easier. Lady Horatia saw and liked her, and invited both her and Celestina to give her as much of their time as they could spare from their little convalescents. In consequence of this invitation, they were now a good deal with her, and Mrs. Elphinstone

phinstone on some occasion expressing how fortunate she thought herself, that in so remote a place she had the honour of becoming known to her, Lady Horatia said, smiling—"And I dare say you think it very extraordinary too, my dear Madam; for unless you had known me before, it would be difficult to account for my being here. Did you never remark that unhappiness makes people restless?"

"Oh, yes! very often"—replied Mrs. Elphinstone, with a sigh.

"It has had that effect on me,"—said Lady Horatia—"and fatiated with every thing in what is called the world, where I have passed the greater part of my life, I often leave it and ramble about, careless of every thing but change of place; my old faithful servants and a few books being the sole companions of my travels. I have, for these last four or five years, given up my house in the country, and passed all the summer in wandering about Switzerland, France, and England. This year I

am going into Scotland, for no other reason than because I have not been there before: at this village one of my horses fell lame; and, as it was indifferent to me where I was, I agreed to my servant's request of staying here a day or two. While I waited, you arrived here; and I own, very sincerely, that I became interested for the children and for the ladies, such as Hemmings described them to me. I hope we shall none of us be sorry for the accidents that detained us here, when the little boys are quite well, as I am persuaded they will be now in a few days. They will have passed happily through a very troublesome distemper, and I think you will each of you have added a friend to your stock: the advantage, however, will be still more evidently mine, for I hope to have added two."

A few days confirmed the good opinion which Lady Horatia entertained of her new acquaintance and her acquaintance of her. If she was particularly attached to
Celestina,

Celestina, it was because she was young enough to be her daughter, and because she told her that she could not look at her, especially when she was reading, or employed in any thing that gave a serious cast to her features, without remarking her likeness to a person she had once fondly loved.

Celestina, whose thoughts were perpetually fixed on the strange mystery which hung over her birth, and who caught at every thing likely to clear it up, blushed deeply the first time she made this remark, and asked whether this person was a foreigner?

Lady Horatia sighed in her turn, and said, no! it was a brother of hers, who had not been long dead. "He was a soldier," said she, "and lost his life in America, in that war which tore it from the British empire. Judge yourself of the likeness, though I well know it must be accidental."

She

She then took out of a travelling trunk a little filligreed casket, in which were several valuable trinkets and several pictures. Three were the portraits of gentlemen.—“Come,” said Lady Horatia, “to prove whether this resemblance is merely a chimaera of mine, let us ask Mrs. Elphinstone if among these pictures she sees one which is like any body she knows; for my dear Miss De Mornay, do you know this similitude of countenance struck me when you were a child with Mrs. Willoughby; and now that your features are more formed, it is, in my mind, wonderfully strong. But, my sweet friend, why do you appear so uneasy?”

“I cannot very well tell,” replied Celestina, trying to force a smile: “I am sure to bear a resemblance to any body dear to your ladyship must be ever pleasing to me, though I well know, that it must be, as you observe, quite accidental.”

Mrs. Elphinstone then coming in, Lady Horatia shewed her the three portraits:—

“Come,

“ Come, tell us, Mrs. Elphinstone, if you know any thing living whom either of these portraits resembles ?

Mrs. Elphinstone took them, and looked steadily a moment on each ; then fixing on one, she looked more intently, first on that and then on Celestina. “ Indeed I think I do,” cried she : “ I surely see a resemblance—a very strong resemblance, between this picture and Miss de Mornay. Bless me, how very like ! the shape of the face, the mouth, the dark-brown eyebrow, the colour of the eyes, the setting on of the hair round the forehead and temples ; except that it is less fair, that the features are proportionably larger, and that you wear a cap, in truth, my dear friend, it might have been drawn for you.

“ And yet,” said Lady Horatia, smiling mournfully, “ this was drawn for a brother of mine, who could, I fear, be no relation to our lovely friend here : so strangely it happens that features coincide.”

“ It

"It is fortunate, very fortunate for me, Madam," said Celestina gravely, "if this resemblance has had the effect of prejudicing your Ladyship in my favour."

"You have merit enough to justify it, though I had conceived an affection for you without any introduction. But we will talk no more of resemblances, if such discourse makes us melancholy."

Lady Horatia then turned the conversation; and the next day, as the two little boys were by this time well enough to continue their journey, they moved on about twenty miles together; Lady Horatia begging for that day to have Celestina with her, while her woman went with Mrs. Elphinstone, to assist in the care of her children.

Celestina, who knew only in general that Lady Horatia was a widow of very affluent fortune, who gave up much of her time to literary pursuits and literary connections, and much of her fortune to the assistance of the unhappy, now learned that

that domestic misfortunes had contributed, with her natural turn of mind, to estrange her entirely from those scenes where Celestina had sometimes formerly seen her; and that having lost an only daughter (the last of her children), of a deep decline, she now tried to call off her mind from the subjects of her mournful contemplations by change of place, and had never, since that period, resided long at any of her own houses, but had passed almost the whole year in travelling; stopping wherever she found a pleasant spot, and often remaining several days, or even weeks, at some remote house. She had once or twice, she said, engaged friends to go with her on these expeditions, but had always found the difficulties they made so much counterbalance the pleasure they were capable of affording her, that she now travelled alone. "Some," said she, "were tired, and some were tasteless; some were talkative, and some were insipid. You will certainly think me fastidious; and perhaps I am so; but indeed it is
more

more difficult to find such a companion as suits me in every respect, than appears at first view. Women of my own age, who are established in the world, cannot of course leave their families and connections; those who are not, are for the most part unhappy from pecuniary or family distresses, and the mind, depressed at that period of life, has lost its power of resistance, and sinks in that hopeless languor from which I often want to be myself relieved by cheerful conversation. The young do not travel for prospects, or enjoy cataracts and mountains: they are looking out for lovers; and are wearied when there are neither men to talk to or adventures to be hoped for. I have tried two or three young ladies; and found, that as we had no ideas in common, our conversation was soon exhausted; and when I was near any place of summer resort, or passed through a town at the time of a race or a music meeting, their hearts were beating to enter into scenes which I was only solicitous to fly from.

Do

Do you know, however, that if I had not met you absolutely engaged on this Scottish journey, I should have been strongly tempted to enquire whether you would allow me to make the experiment once more, where I am strongly impressed with an idea that I should meet with better success."

Celestina answered, that her good opinion did her the utmost honour: and by degrees the tender and maternal sollicitude Lady Horatia expressed for her, drew from her the little narrative of her life. Lady Horatia expressed the greatest aversion to Lady Castlenorth. "It is true," said she, "I do not know her much from my own observation; for she is a woman whose conversation I had always disliked and avoided; but from some anecdotes of her that have been related to me by those who know her well, I believe it may with truth be said of her, as was said of a celebrated political character, that she has 'a heart to imagine, a head to contrive, and a hand to execute any mischief.' Willoughby
is

is young, open-hearted, and artless: by no means likely to suspect, or likely to detect artifice so deep as what she is capable of; and I am well convinced that there are no contrivances at which she would hesitate, either to carry a favourite point or avenge its failure.

Celestina was extremely comforted by this opinion given by so good a judge. Every other sorrow was comparatively light to that which she felt from the idea, whenever it forced itself upon her mind, that Willoughby had, through ambition, or caprice, or avarice, voluntarily deserted her; and every opinion that strengthened her own hopes of his unaltered affection, and imputed his leaving her to the evil machinations of the Castlenorths, was soothing and consolatory.

Lady Horatia Howard was now travelling towards Edinburgh, and made the time of Mrs. Elphinstone her own, for the pleasure she derived from her company, and still more from that of Celestina, to whom

whom, during this journey, she became so much attached, that she made her promise to come to her whenever the abode she was now going to should be inconvenient, or whenever she was under the necessity of changing it. An invitation so flattering was gratefully accepted; and Lady Horatia having shewn both her travelling friends every polite and generous attention, took leave of them with regret on their leaving Edinburgh with Elphinstone, who was there waiting for them. She gave Celestina directions whither to write to her for the remainder of the summer, and again made her promise to come to her in the winter, if she left her Scottish friends; and at all events to contrive to pass with her two or three months of the next summer. After taking leave of her, a very tedious and very dreary journey of many days brought the Elphinstone's and Celestina to the sea-side, where they were to embark for the Isle of Skie. Mrs. Elphinstone, accustomed to see so many different countries,

was

was yet struck with dismay at the sight of the black and dreary heaths over which they travelled; and in spite of all her attempts to sustain her courage, she looked at her children with eyes where maternal anguish was too visibly expressed. Elphinstone, however, to whom novelty had always charms, was not yet weary of his situation, and he was as gay and unconcerned as if he had been leading his wife to the most beautiful estate in England. Celestina, though very little delighted with the country they had passed through, was determined to testify no dislike to it that might add to the painful dejection of her friend, and by making light of the inconveniences of the journey, and putting their hopes and prospects in the fairest light, she supported her drooping spirits, which the thoughtless and somewhat unfeeling vivacity of Elphinstone himself, served rather to depress than to support.

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVED at their insular abode after great fatigue, Mrs. Elphinstone, recalling all her fortitude, busied herself in making it as comfortable as she could; and assumed, at least, the appearance of cheerfulness, though Celestina saw with concern that it was often *but* appearance. Celestina herself, however, whose mind had too long been unpleasingly called off from that object on which she best loved to fix it, was far from being displeased by the perfect seclusion of the place. She could now wander whole days alone, amid the wild solitude in which she found herself, listening only to the rush of the cataract, which, dashing through broken stones, sparkled among the dark heath on either side of it;

or

or the sullen waves of the ocean itself, which on all sides surrounded her. The ptarmigan,* bursting from its heathy covert, or the sea fowl screaming from the rocks, were the only sounds that broke these murmurs; but she found her spirits soothed by the wildness of the places she visited; and far from regretting the more cultivated scenes she had left, she rejoiced that since she no longer could hope to see Willoughby, she was released from the necessity of attending to any other person.

The immense distance that was now between them, she sometimes considered with dismay; but at others she remembered—

“ That distance only, cannot change the heart.”

She trusted on the long tried, the long assured tenderness of her lover, and was willing to indulge the soothing hope that they should meet again to be separated no more, and that he was labouring to remove

* A bird of the grouse kind, common in the Highlands of Scotland.

the fatal obstacle, whatever it was that now divided them.

After having been above five weeks on the island, a large packet arrived from Cathcart. It enclosed, among many to his sister, one to Celestina from Willoughby; and this, more than any she had yet received from him since his absence, seemed to assure her of his unfailing attachment. It was less confused than those he had formerly written, and seemed the production of a mind more master of itself: and, though it did not speak in positive terms of his immediate return, Celestina fancied that many of the expressions alluded to that hour; and her heart found this idea so deliciously soothing, that she would not suffer her reason to deprive her of any part of the pleasure she found in indulging it.

A few of the residents of this and the neighbouring islands were by this time acquainted at the house of Mr. Elphinstone. The young (and of young people their visitors principally consisted), were all
charmed

charmed with Celestina, who, whatever was her inclination for solitude, never refused to make one in the ramble of the morning, or to join the cheerful dance of an evening. Elphinstone, naturally good humoured, and particularly desirous of pleasing her, soon became anxious to promote these parties, which Celestina, whose heart was opened to new sensations of pleasure since the receipt of Willoughby's last letter, did not decline; not only because she found much in these remote regions to gratify her curiosity, but because she foresaw that, from the shortness of the summer so far North, the days when these amusements were practicable were drawing to their conclusion, and that she soon should be left unmolested, to listen to the roaring of the water, and the sighings of the wind round the naked rocks, against which it incessantly beat.

It was now the end of July, and Celestina had already visited Jona and several other islands. Sometimes these excursions
had

had been made with Mrs. Elphinstone, but oftener without her. Elphinstone kept a boat, which was always ready for the service of Celestina; and, when his wife could not go with her, a Miss Macqueen, a very agreeable young Highland lady, always made the third.

Several little isles, which afford no habitations for winter, are scattered among the larger islands, which are called the Hebrides. One of these lay within sight of Elphinstone's house (which was close to the shore), at the distance of about a mile and a half. It was remarkable for the grotesque form of the cliffs which arose round it, and for a stream of the purest water, that bubbled up at the highest ground, and fell into the sea through a chasm of the rock. Celestina, to whom Elphinstone had shewn it, laughingly called it her island; and he, in return, had said, that were she established on it, it would become more dangerous than the island of Calypso. Among other little plans of amusement, which the decline

of summer insensibly rendered more frequent, it was agreed that, on the first fine day, some cold provisions should be taken, and that they would all dine together, on one of the natural stone tables in Celestina's island.

A fine day was found : the party, which were Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone, Miss Macqueen, and two gentlemen, were ready, when one of the boatmen who usually accompanied them was no where to be found. Elphinstone, equally impatient and eager, whatever was the importance or insignificance of the matter he was engaged in, was going himself in search of the missing man, when one of those who remained in the boat followed, and told him, that there was a young man a few yards farther on the shore, who would take the place of him that was absent, and that it was better not to wait : Elphinstone, satisfied so long as his party was not interrupted, accepted the offer, and the boatman beckoning to a Highlander who stood at some distance, he

he ran towards them, and was admitted into the boat.

The party now put off from shore. The water was beautifully smooth, the sky clear, and the wind in their favour: very little exertion, therefore, on the part of the men who were entrusted with the navigation, landed them safely on the Ilk. It did not contain more than three acres of land, and the sole inhabitant of it was a solitary herdsman, whose temporary dwelling, composed of loose stones, turf, and heath, he had raised, under the protection of a large cliff of grey slate, that seemed to have started away, in a strange concussion of nature, from some other island, and to have fixed itself as a sea-mark, amidst the perpendicular and abrupt rocks that fenced this on every side. The spring burst out near its base, and here the party sat down to make their gay repast.

When it was over, the gentlemen went away; and while the boatmen were at dinner, pushed out the boat themselves,

and began to fish near the shore; while Celestina, leaving the ladies together, walked away alone to the western coast of the island.

The sun was already declining in an almost cloudless sky, and gave the warmest splendour to the broad expanse of ocean, broken by several islands, whose rocky points and angular cliffs caught the strong lights, in brilliant contrast to the lurid hue of the heath with which their summits were clothed, and which on the northern and eastern sides threw a dark shadow on the clear and tranquil bosom of the sea. The sea-birds, in swarming myriads, were returning to their nests among the ragged precipices beneath her; and Celestina, recalling to her mind the "green delights" of Alvestone,

"Its deepening woods, gay lawns, and airy summits,"

compared it, in pensive contemplation, with the scene before her; yet, different as they were, she thought that, with Willoughby,

loughby, any place would be to her a Paradise; and that, even in such a remote spot as this, she should be happy, if it gave only a subsistence with him.

This train of thought a little indulged, made her have recourse to her pencil, and produced an address to him in the following

S O N N E T.

On this lone island, whose unfruitful breast
Feeds but the summer-shepherds little flock,
With scanty herbage from the half-cloath'd rock,
Where osprays, cormorants, and sea-mews rest ;
Even in a scene so desolate and rude
I could with *thee* for months and years be blest ;
And, of thy tenderness and love possess,
Find all *my* world in this lone solitude !
When the bright sun these northern seas illumine,
With thee admire the light's reflected charms ;
And when drear Winter spreads his cheerless gloom,
Still find Elysium in thy sheltering arms ;
For thou to me canst sov'reign bliss impart,
Thy mind my empire, and my throne thy heart.

The broad orb of the sun was now only half seen above the horizon; and Celestina, who had little marked the progress of time, rose, and hastened to join her companions. As she turned for this purpose, towards that part of the island where she had left them, she saw the Highlander, who had been taken by chance into the boat in consequence of the absence of another, start up from the ground at about two hundred paces from her, where he seemed to have been concealed behind a cairn or pile of rude stones, and hurry away towards the part of the shore where the boat had been left. The incident, however, made no great impression on her mind, but from the singular appearance of the man, who was in a complete Highland dress, which is now not often seen, and which made him, as he walked very quickly on before her, seem exactly the figure a painter would have chosen to have placed in a landscape, representing the
heathy

heathy summits and romantic rocks of the Hebrides.

She soon rejoined Mrs. Elphinstone and Miss Macqueen. The three gentlemen almost as soon approached, to tell them it was time to return ; and they arrived again at their home, after a little excursion with which all seemed pleased, though Celestina had suffered some raillery, for having so long deserted them.

Every day now passed nearly alike, diversified only now and then by the company of a stranger from some of the other islands, and sometimes a party in the boat. Elphinstone was not yet tired by the project which brought him hither, for to use an expression of his wife's, which she uttered with a melancholy smile to Celestina, "the new was not yet off." He was therefore gay and alert; persuaded himself, by calculations, which he made after his own sanguine manner, that he was not only a benefactor to the public, but should in a few years realize a great fortune, by facilitating

tating the capture of herrings among the western islands of Scotland.

The season for the proof of his exploits in this way was now rapidly approaching, and he became every day more busy: but his wife looked forward to it with less pleasure: she languished for her little girls, who were at the other extremity of England, and thought with dismay of the tempests of winter, which would shut her out from the little communication she yet had with that country. But whatever was her regret, she suffered it not to disturb the transient happiness her husband seemed to enjoy, nor to communicate any gloom to the milder cheerfulness of Celestina, whose company was her greatest resource against that cold despondence, which, in despite of all her fortitude, sometimes seized on her heart.

Celestina had now been almost three months an inhabitant of the Isle of Skie, and felt nothing unpleasant in her insular situation, but the length of time that
must

must always elapse before she could hear from Willoughby or even from Cathcart. A second packet was however brought to Mrs. Elphinstone from the latter before the expiration of the eleventh week of their abode. With eager impatience it was opened. Celestina received her part of it with a beating heart; but on unsealing it found no letter from Willoughby. A letter, in a hand which she did not at the moment recollect ever to have seen before, attracted her attention and added something of terror. She looked eagerly at the name, and saw it signed with that of the elder Mr. Thorold. Her spirits sunk! was it some ill news of Willoughby, which he communicated that he might soften the blow? She hurried it over in such breathless agitation as hardly gave her leave to understand what she read, which was to this effect:

“ Your old friend, amiable Celestina,
“ though he has only had one letter from

“ you since you left him, reminds you of
“ himself once more, and is sorry that,
“ like every thing in this world, his letter
“ will convey to you a mixture of pleasure
“ and pain.

“ My daughter Arabella is married, to
“ her own wishes and those of her mother.
“ In point of fortune she has done
“ well. We cannot here obtain every
“ thing. I hope she will be happy, and
“ am sure she will be rich, which, in the
“ opinion of most fathers, you know, puts
“ the former point out of doubt. You
“ will guess that Mr. Bettenson is the
“ gentleman who is now numbered with
“ my family. My wife has been gone
“ with the new-married couple some weeks
“ to the seat of Mr. Bettenson’s father in
“ Norfolk.

“ You know I love home; and I love
“ that those who are less delighted with
“ it should not be needlessly disturbed
“ when they are out; for which reason I
“ have never communicated to his mother,
“ ther,

“ther, that Montague, after attending
“his sister’s wedding here, did not return
“to Oxford as he talked of doing; that
“It know not whither he is gone, and
“have only had one letter from him since,
“in which he assures me he is well, and
“desires I would not be uneasy about him.

“It is very difficult to be otherwise.
“This eccentric young man makes me
“tremble for him perpetually. Having
“no clue to direct my guesses, I have no
“conjecture where or with whom he is;
“and think it better to say as little as I can
“about an absence on which a thousand
“unfavourable constructions may be put.
“Ah! my lovely ward, how fortunate it
“would have been, if, when his judgment
“directed his heart, it could have been ac-
“cepted where—but this is wrong, or at
“best useless. Farewel! May heaven pro-
“tect you! and I pray you not to forget.

“Your most faithful friend,

B. THOROLD.”

Relieved

Relieved from her first apprehensions, Celestina felt extremely concerned at the absence of Montague Thorold; so painful to his father, perhaps so discreditable to himself. She read over the letter again; and fancied it very evident that Mr. Thorold imputed it to some new attachment; and giving a sigh to the recollection of all it must cost such a father to see such an unfortunate turn of mind blast all the acquirements of learning, and all the advantages of genius, she turned her thoughts to Willoughby, and felt with renewed poignancy the disappointment of not having heard from him.

Another and another week passed without any intelligence, and all the soothing hopes Celestina had so fondly encouraged gradually gave way to fear and apprehension. At length a second packet arrived: it contained a letter indeed from Willoughby; but so far was it from confirming the favourable presages of the former, that she saw in it only a prelude to the
event

event which other information made her believe would soon happen—the marriage of Willoughby and Miss Fitz-Hayman. Lady Horatia Howard, whose attachment to Celestina had taken very deep root, had written to her from London, whither she was now gone, and had told her, with as much tenderness as she could, that such was the general report among the relations of the family, and what was generally believed in the world. From the same channel she also learned that Sir Philip and Lady Molyneux were expected in England early in the ensuing winter, and that a large house in Portman-square was fitting up in the most splendid stile for their reception.

Lady Horatia concluded a most friendly letter to Celestina thus :

“ But, my dear Miss De Mornay, how-
“ ever all these things may be, let me
“ hope that you will not hide yourself in
“ the Hebrides all the winter : why should
“ you ? Talents and virtues like your’s
“ were

“were never intended for obscurity.
“Come then to me, and assure yourself
“of the truest welcome. You need not
“apprehend meeting Mr. Willoughby
“and his bride, for it is understood that
“they are to remain some time abroad;
“and before they return to England,
“you will have learned to conquer those
“painful emotions which the sight of
“them now perhaps might give you.
“*Your* understanding sets you above the
“puerile indulgence which inferior minds
“claim by prescription towards a first
“love. The man whom any common
“consideration could induce, after hav-
“ing won your affections, to desert you,
“never could deserve you; and if some
“insurmountable barrier is between you,
“you will learn to consider him as a
“friend, and consult his peace in regain-
“ing that cheerfulness which he meant
“not to destroy; but which to see de-
“stroyed, must overcloud his days, how-
“ever prosperous they may otherwise be.”

There

There was in this letter more meant than was expressed; and on considering it, the wonder and uneasiness of Celestina were redoubled. But however obliged she thought herself by the friendly interest Lady Horatia took in her happiness, and however just her arguments might be, she felt no inclination to quit her present solitude; and since she had now less hope than ever of meeting Willoughby, she had less than ever a desire to return into the world, but gave herself up to that melancholy despondence, against which hope, and her own sanguine and cheerful temper, had till now supported her.

To indulge this encreasing sadness, it was now her custom to walk out alone after dinner, and to make for herself a species of gloomy enjoyment from the dreary and wild scenes around her. A little time before, she had been imagining how pleasant the most desolate of these barren islands might be rendered to her by the presence of her beloved Willoughby. She now rather

ther sought images of horror. The sun, far distant from this northern region, was as faint and languid as the sick thoughts of Celestina: his feeble rays no longer gave any warm colouring to the rugged cliffs that rose above her head, or lent the undulating sea that sparkling brilliance which a few weeks before had given gaiety and cheerfulness even to these scattered masses of almost naked stone, against which the water incessantly broke. Grey, fullen, and cold, the waves now slowly rolled towards the shore, where Celestina frequently sat whole hours, as if to count them, when she had in reality no idea present to her but Willoughby lost to her for ever—Willoughby forgetting her, and married to Miss Fitz-Hayman!

She had more than once remarked, in returning from her walks, that a man, who kept always at such a distance that she could merely discover to be a Highlander, seemed to be observing her; yet as he never came near her, and always disappeared

disappeared before she got near the house, she could not imagine him to be one of the people belonging to Elphinstone: but puzzled rather than alarmed by his appearance, for which she could not account, she insensibly ceased to notice him. Mrs. Elphinstone, occupied as she was by her own domestic uneasiness, was still most tenderly attentive to Celestina, and endeavoured to communicate to her some of that still and mournful acquiescence which served her in place of philosophy. Celestina had not yet suffered enough to learn it; but she forbore to add to the melancholy of her friend by indulging her own while they were together; and this restraint threw her more than ever into entire solitude, though the autumn was so far advanced that the weather frequently drove her from the open hill, or the vale under it, to the casual shelter of some natural cave, by the side of which, the torrent, increased by the storm, hoarsely rushed, and was answered by the roar of other streams,
whose

whose hollow murmurs swelled in the gusts of wind that whistled through the mountainous tracks, and compelled even the fowls of the desert to seek shelter, where only it was afforded, within the caverns of the cliffs, or among the matted heath that clothed their summits.

The delicate, the elegant, the lovely Celestina, she whose talents would have adorned the most informed society, and whose beauty might have given new lustre to the fairest assembly, was thus a self-banished recluse in the remotest and most uncultivated part of the British dominions. Her wish now was, to pass her whole life here, in that sullen calm which she at length hoped to obtain; and the rudest scene of these islands now appeared to her infinitely preferable to any of the pleasures Lady Horatia Howard offered her, since *they* could only serve to remind her of Willoughby; perhaps to shew her how happy he could learn to be, united with another.

The

The frequency of storms now prevented many of those visits which had, during summer, a little broken, for Elphinstone, the uniformity of solitude; but it was the height of the season for catching herrings, and he was busy, and for the present happy; while his unfortunate wife, who, desolate as her present situation was, yet dreaded the hour when this bustle should sink into discontent and give place to other projects, received him on his return from those expeditions to other islands, in which he was now frequently engaged, always with cheerfulness, which he did not, or would not see, was forced; and sometimes with smiles, which to every body but him very evidently were the smiles of stifled anguish.

Celestina answered Lady Horatia's letter as it deserved, but to Willoughby she determined not to write. That trembling solicitude with which she had been accustomed to expect letters from him, it was now, she thought, time to subdue, for she
persuaded

persuaded herself that never again they would bring to her any thing but anguish and regret: and yet by those contradicting sensations to which violent attachments subject the human heart, she incessantly indulged herself in thinking of all those happy hours which she had passed with him, whom she fancied deserved little or no regret, of whom she ought not to think at all, and yet was so fond of recollecting, that every conversation was irksome to her, and every employment a task, which took off her attention a moment from him.

“Ti perdo! ti lascio, non ti vedro piu—”

she repeated incessantly to herself, sometimes with tears of tenderness, and sometimes with those painful emotions of mingled anger and regret which press on the heart when pride and resentment are struggling with affection. In other moods she reproached herself for thus cherishing this unhappy passion, tried to recal those days of resignation when, without hope of ever
being

being his, she yet preferred Willoughby to all mankind; and to dismiss from her mind for ever the recollection of the few weeks when he had awakened that hope, and called forth all her sensibility only as it should seem to render her wretched; then she exclaimed in her native language—

“ *Felicité passée*

“ *Qui ne peut revenir*

“ *Tourment de ma pensée*

“ *Que n'ai je en te perdant, perdu le souvenir.*”

In these gloomy moods, she was quite unable to remain a moment in company, especially in the company of Elphinstone, who, with the true projector's infatuation, fancied every body else as much interested about the fishery as he was; and persecuted her with details of how many *busses* he had out and how many *lasts* they had taken; what was the best method of curing them, and of the superiority which a few years would give the fishery in which he was engaged, over the Dutch.

Celestina

Celestina began to dread the conversation; and had it not been for Mrs. Elphinstone, of whose suffering merit she was every hour more sensible, she could hardly not have forbore to express her weariness and disgust. A hearer was necessary to Elphinstone; and when he had nobody else to talk to, this unenviable place was filled by the inwardly-impatient Celestina.

It happened, however, that she was released from this for some days. Towards the end of November, Elphinstone went to the Isle of Harris, on his business, as he fancied, and the wind being against his return, she no longer listened to the method of curing herrings, but returned to her shortened but less interrupted walks. In one of these, towards the close of a very lowering and cheerless day, when her way was along the rugged cliffs that, on the western side of the island, hung over the sea, she composed the following sonnet:

THE

THE PILGRIM.

Faltering and fad, the unhappy pilgrim roves,
Who, on the eve of bleak December's night,
Divided far from all he fondly loves,
Journeys alone, along the giddy height
Of these steep cliffs, and as the sun's last ray
Fades in the West, sees, from the rocky verge,
Dark tempest scowling o'er the shorten'd day,
And hears, with ear appall'd, the impetuous surge
Beneath him thunder!—So, with heart oppress'd,
Alone, reluctant, desolate, and slow,
By friendship's cheering radiance *now* unblest,
Along life's rudest path I seem to go;
Nor see where yet the anxious heart may rest,
That trembling at the past—recoils from future woe!

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

ELPHINSTONE had now been absent some days, and the wind, which was contrary and violent, prevented his return to the place of his abode. Mrs. Elphinstone became uneasy at the storms which detained him, and Celestina participated in her anxiety. At length the wind sunk, and, towards the evening of the fifth day of his absence, was fair to bring him from Herries. Mrs. Elphinstone, who had been a good deal alarmed by the hurricanes of several preceding days, and had wearied her spirits by watching the weather and keeping an anxious eye towards the impracticable sea, found herself indisposed and shivering; and telling Celestina that she believed she had
caught

caught cold, she went early to bed, remarking, as she bade her good night, that Elphinstone would probably be at home in the morning.

Celestina, left alone, went out as was her custom, even although the evening was already closed in; and standing on the edge of the rocks, near the house, remarked the singular appearance of the moon, which was now rising. It was large, and of a dull red, surrounded by clouds of a deep purple, whose skirts seemed touched with flame. Large volumes of heavy vapour were gathering in the sky, and the heaving surges swelled towards the shore, and broke upon it with that sullen regularity that foretells a storm. From the North, arose distinctly the pointed rays of the Aurora Borealis: fiery and portentous, they seemed to flash like faint lightning a little while, till the moon becoming clearer, rendered them less visible.

Not a sound was heard but the dull murmurs of the sea on one side, and the

rapid waterfalls on the other, whose increased noise foretold with equal certainty an approaching tempest. Celestina, who was in that disposition of mind to which horrors are congenial, walked slowly on notwithstanding; but quitting the cliffs, on account of the gales of wind which now blew from the sea, she went along a narrow pass, where there was a cairn, or heap of stones loosely piled together, the work of the first wild natives of the country; and as that was as far as she thought it proper to venture from the house, though it was not more than eight o'clock, she leaned pensively against it, and watched with some surprise the fluctuations of the clouds that were wildly driven by the wind across the disk of the moon, and listened with a kind of chill awe, to the loud yet hollow echo of the wind among the hills; which sometimes sobbed with stormy violence for a moment, and then suddenly sinking, was succeeded by a pause more terrible.

It

It was in one of these moments of alarming silence, that Celestina thought she saw the shadow of a human form for a moment on the ground, as if the person was behind her who occasioned it. She was very little subject to fear; but the loneliness of the place, and her own desponding spirits together, made her start with terror and turn round. Something immediately glided away; and convinced that the first impression had not been the work of fancy, she hastened with quick steps from the place, and hardly at the distance of above a hundred yards, ventured to look behind her. She fancied that she saw a man standing in the place she had left; and the strange superstitions of the islands, of which she had heard much since her residing on them, crowding at that moment on her mind, she became extremely terrified, and hurried on with such unguarded speed, that a little before she reached the house she trod on a loose stone, that turned under her foot, and she fell with some violence

and with considerable pain ; which, together with the fear she had before felt, produced a momentary stupor, from which she was awakened by finding herself eagerly raised from the ground by some person, who wildly expressed his fears for her safety, and in whose voice she recognized, with astonishment that deprived her of utterance, Montague Thorold. Surprise at that moment conquered the pain she felt : “ Oh ! Mr. Montague ! ” cried she, “ is it possible ? For heaven’s sake what brought you hither ? ”

“ No matter what,” replied he eagerly : “ think not—ask not about me !—when you are yourself hurt—in pain—bruised, I fear, by your fall ! ”

“ I have no hurt so great,” said Celestina, rising and attempting to walk : “ I feel no bodily pain so acute, as that which your extraordinary conduct gives me.”

“ Let me assist you into the house,” interrupted he. “ Do you not see that the tempest, which has been gathering the whole

whole evening in the south-west, is now driving hither with uncommon fury?"

"And let it come," answered she languidly: "I am just now so very unhappy myself—I feel so much for the unhappiness of my friends, particularly of your father, that it is indifferent to me what comes."

"It is not for *me*, at least, that you feel," answered he: "that I know but too well: but undoubtedly you will be greatly concerned for poor Elphinstone, whose boat has been beating about ever since night-fall, within a mile of the shore, at the imminent hazard of being dashed to pieces."

At this information Celestina forgot herself, forgot the uneasy astonishment into which the unexpected presence of Montague Thorold had thrown her, and the danger of Elphinstone occupied all her thoughts. "Oh! where!" cried she, "where is he? Shew me the bark which is in so much hazard, and for heaven's

fake call the people, who are not, perhaps, aware of its danger."

"Alas!" answered he, "several men have been upon the shore above half an hour, alarmed, as I was, at the danger the vessel was in of striking on the rocks, which she has got among from the unexpected shifting of the wind; but in their present state no human assistance can do them any service."

He had, during this dialogue, taken her arm, and led her towards a point of the rock, where she saw, by the pale and uncertain light of a moon, wrapped continually in volumes of clouds, the boat struggling among the dark heavy waves which often totally concealed it, and continually driven by the sudden gusts of violent wind from the point it was attempting to reach.

She now saw and shuddered at the peril of those who were in it: but still fancying it was possible to afford them assistance, she felt impatient and almost angry that Montague Thorold, holding her arm
within

within his, stood gazing when she fancied he might be helping. "Why stand here," cried she, "when we might be of use in summoning people to the assistance of those poor creatures?" While she yet spoke, and while Montague, though not less alive to their distress, was less sanguine in the hope to assist them, and therefore still hesitated, she disengaged herself hastily from his arm, and flew towards the house, no longer conscious of any thing but their danger: before she could reach it, though the distance was not a quarter of a mile, the wind suddenly blew with treble fury, and a hail storm accompanied it, against which she found it difficult to stand. She found the door open, and Mrs. Elphinstone, whom the wind and the talking of the servants had awakened, already below. Trembling with apprehension, which the sudden appearance of Celestina increased—"Good God, my dear friend, what is the matter?" cried she, "and why are you out in so dreadful a night?"

D 4

"Ah!

"Ah! dear Madam!" replied Celestina:
"Mr. Elphinstone—his boat——"

"What of him?" interrupted her terrified friend: "is he drowned? is he lost?"

"No, no! I hope, I believe not," cried Celestina; "but a boat, which they say is his, is beating off the island, and the people are afraid it will go to pieces."

This was enough for the unhappy Mrs. Elphinstone, who seeing, in its most dreadful light the evil which threatened her, now ran herself wildly towards the beach; while Celestina, overtaking her with difficulty, persuaded her to accept her assistance—assistance which she was very little able to give.

The sad event had happened before the trembling friends had reached the headland. The boat striking on the sunken rocks, to save it from which the united efforts of the little crew had been exerted in vain, was staved to pieces, and the unhappy men, already exhausted with fatigue, were unable to resist, by swimming,
the

the violence of the sea. Mrs. Elphinstone and Celestina looked out in vain for the place where a few moments before the boat had been seen: no vestige of it remained, and they saw only, by the waning moon, which but served to lend new horrors to the view, the wild waves dashing over these rocks in sheets of white foam; while the fury of the winds and the beating of the rain hardly allowed them to stand on the precipice that overlooked the scene of stormy desolation.

Celestina doubted but little of the calamity, and therefore endeavoured to persuade her unfortunate friend to return to the house; but this was impossible: she continued to wander backwards and forwards for some moments, till terror quite overcame her; and she threw herself on the ground, saying, in a low and solemn voice, to Celestina—"Elphinstone is drowned; I know he is; and here I will wait to see his corpse, which will be driven on shore in the morning." Then starting

up, she would have gone down to the shore, from an idea which suddenly occurred to her that he might yet be saved by swimming. Celestina, not knowing whether it was best to prevent or to indulge her ; unable to dissimulate, and affect hope she did not feel, was in a situation hardly better than that of her distracted friend whom she supported, when Montague Thorold joined them. Mrs. Elphinstone, occupied only by the terror of the moment, took no notice of the extraordinary circumstance of a stranger, whom she had never seen before, thus suddenly appearing ; but unconscious of every thing, and heedless of who he was, requested, in accents of piercing anguish, his assistance to help her down the winding path which led to the beach. He lent it, though very certain that the catastrophe had already taken place which by her eager and wild enquiries he saw she yet thought doubtful ; and giving her one arm, while with the other he clasped the trembling

trembling hand of Celestina, they reached the place, where seven or eight men were already assembled. The moon was by this time down, and the darkness was only broken by livid flashes of faint lightning, which, with the thunder muttering at a distance, encreased the horrors of the storm. Amid the black and swelling waves, however, objects were seen floating, and many of these heavy seas had not broken on the shore, before these objects were discerned to be the bodies of those who had perished, and that of the ill-fated Elphinstone was one of the first which was thrown on the beach, and too well known by his unhappy wife. She now no longer remembered all the causes of uneasiness that her husband had given her; but saw only Elphinstone, once so fondly beloved, the possessor of her first affections, the father of her children, a disfigured corpse before her. Her native strength of understanding, and the calmness acquired by habitual suffering, forsook her at once, and
grief

grief produced a momentary phrenzy, during which fearful paroxysm, Celestina, whose presence of mind was now summoned to the assistance of her poor unhappy friend, had her conveyed with great difficulty to the house: where Montague Thorold attending them both with the most assiduous tenderness, she watched for many days over the disordered intellects of the ill-fated Mrs. Elphinstone before she saw them restored. At length the violence of her affliction, which Celestina found means to soften by presenting her children continually to her, and talking to her of those that were absent, sunk into the calm torpor of despair. She heard nothing, she saw nothing but the children, whom she would not suffer to be a moment absent from her; and the agitation of her mind preying on her slender frame, she was reduced to a state of languor which made Celestina tremble for her life.

Celestina had, immediately after the fatal event, written to Cathcart, desiring his directions,

directions, and even entreating him to come himself to fetch them all from a place where there was now no reason for their stay. But she knew that it must be five or six weeks before she could have an answer; and hardly dared trust herself to meditate on the scenes of distress she must in that time encounter.

Amid all the horrors, however, which had surrounded her, she had not forgotten the fears and alarms to which she knew the absence of Montague Thorold exposed his father, her benefactor; she seized the first interval, after the death of Elphinstone, to urge to him the cruelty of his conduct, and to entreat him to return home; but he replied, that nothing on earth should induce him to leave the place where she was, while there was a probability of his being of use to her; and that, whether she admitted him to see her, or drove him from her, the island should be his residence while she remained in it. All that then remained for her was, to write to Mr. Thorold,

Thorold, which she did, under cover to Cathcart, acquainting him, as briefly as she could, of the unexpected appearance of his son, and all that had happened since.

Having thus far acquitted herself, she found herself in a situation in which it was almost impossible for her to help receiving the assistance of one to whom she trembled to be obliged, while she knew it encouraged and augmented a passion that empoisoned his life. On him, however, she was compelled to entrust the regulation of the last melancholy offices that were to be performed for poor Elphinstone, who was interred in a little ruined chapel, about two miles from his late residence; his wife consenting reluctantly to this disposition, and taking opiates incessantly to procure that torpor which alone prevented the more violent ebullitions of grief from seizing her again, when the remains of her husband were removed.

Recourse to opiates became gradually a habit with Mrs. Elphinstone; and though

Celestina

Celestina trembled for the consequences, she thought it almost inhuman to oppose the application of any remedy, which, under such circumstances, won her friend from sorrow even for an hour. Yet the frequent absences it occasioned, compelled her to be very long and very often alone with Montague Thorold, to whose manly tenderness on the late sad occasion she could not be insensible, and to whose unceasing attention she was every hour more obliged. In the first conference they had held, when the melancholy event to which they had been witnesses allowed them to talk of themselves, Celestina, after urging him to return to his father by every motive with which reason and truth supplied her, repeated to him with great firmness her resolution never to marry if Willoughby was not her husband, and represented very forcibly the cruelty as well as absurdity of his pursuing her; to which he replied, that he knew all she represented before he came thither, that his only wish was to be allowed to see her,

her, though at a distance, and his only gratification, that of being suffered to breathe the same air; that it was the natural privilege of every human being to pursue their happiness when it injured nobody; and that finding *his* consisted in being near her, though without even the hope of her admitting him into her presence, he had followed that axiom, and had for some weeks been the distant and unseen companion of all her walks. “I was the Highlander,” said he, “who supplied the vacancy I had before taken care to make, when you went your excursion on the water. I am the person of whom you have sometimes caught a glimpse at a distance, and who would never have approached you nearer, had not my fears for you the evening of the storm thrown me off my guard, and induced me to conceal myself within a few yards of you, behind those piled-up stones against which you leaned. “Ah! I heard you sigh—I heard the name of Willoughby repeated with
tenderness!

tenderness ! but I bore it all ; and nothing, believe me, nothing but your fall, your apparent danger, could have compelled me to break the vow I had made never to intrude upon you—never to offend you with my unhappy passion !”

Celestina could not help being affected with the melancholy solemnity with which he uttered these words ; but making an effort to prevent his perceiving it, she said—
“ It is absolutely necessary now that you again take up as much of so proper a resolution, as relates to not speaking to me on a topic which to you must be useless, and to me painful ; and while you persist in remaining here, let me at least owe it to your complaisance, not to be distressed by declarations to which I cannot, ought not, will not listen.”

Montague Thorold, then laying his hand on his heart, assured her, that if she would allow him only to see her, indulge him only with being useful to her in her present remote and comfortless residence,
he

he never would again name to her the passion which he knew, he said, he must carry to the grave; and from that moment he kept his word; though Celestina saw, with more emotion perhaps than the warmest declarations could have given her, his painful struggles and continual contention with himself: but while her pity for him increased, she studied more carefully to conceal from him that she felt any, and behaved with as much calm politeness as she could have done towards the most indifferent man in the world.

To beguile the tedious moments during which they were compelled to wait the hoped-for arrival of Cathcart, and while the sea that surrounded them was agitated continually by the wintry tempest, Celestina had recourse to the books with which poor Elphinstone, who, among all his faults and errors, was not without taste, had furnished a closet in the house. Mrs. Elphinstone, moved by the representations of Celestina, to attend to her health for the
fake

sake of her children, whose sole dependence was now on her, consented by degrees to listen while Celestina read. Montague Thorold, whose residence was at the cottage of a Highlander that boasted of having two rooms and a chimney, about a mile farther on the island, was sometimes admitted to these parties; and as Celestina was soon fatigued, and as he read remarkably well, Mrs. Elphinstone appeared pleased with his taking occasionally the office of their reader; and gradually he became accustomed to attend them every afternoon, and to read aloud to them till the hour of their simple supper.

Among the books in this little collection, there were several that Celestina recollected as the peculiar favourites of Willoughby; and the remembrance of those days when he read them to her, though never a moment absent from her thoughts, were now most forcibly recalled, by hearing them again repeated. Some pieces of poetry particularly affected her, from their simple
pathos,

pathos, and the manner in which Montague Thorold read them; while they often drew tears from the unhappy Mrs. Elphinstone, an effect at which Celestina rejoiced, as her grief was now settled into that still and sullen melancholy, unsolicitous of consolation, and incapable of receiving it; which, while it produces a degree of apparent calmness, preys with fatal power on the heart.

Thus passed the heavy hours; till at length, after a fortnight's longer delay than they had reckoned upon, letters were received from Cathcart: they contained intelligence that old Winnington was dead, and Jessy in such a state of health as made it almost impossible for Cathcart to leave her. He therefore besought Celestina to accept the protection of Montague Thorold for herself, for Mrs. Elphinstone, and her children, and to hasten to his house, where he was now as able as happy to receive them, as soon as was possible and safe. Mr. Thorold wrote also to Celestina,
and

and expressed his hope that the wild eccentricity of his son, which had occasioned to him so much pain, might at least be of service to her, and entreated her to allow him to attend her and her unfortunate friend into Devonshire, where he assured her he would prevent her receiving any trouble from the importunities of Montague, should he be weak enough to presume too much on her favour. He wrote also to his son; but after the contents of that letter Celestina did not enquire, and Montague carefully concealed them.

It was now determined, that the plan laid down by Cathcart and Mr. Thorold should be pursued. Montague undertook the arrangement of every thing; and, within ten days, they were ready to depart.

The weather alone seemed likely to prevent their crossing the water. Mrs. Elphinstone, who had till now feared nothing, being so apprehensive for her children, that every gust of wind, every swell of the sea, made her shrink back with dismay,

may, and postpone from day to day a little voyage which she yet earnestly wished over. It was the end of November, and very good weather could hardly be expected. Dark and gloomy days, with storms of wind and rain, succeeded each other; and Celestina, whose thoughts had been of late called frequently from her own mournful contemplations to the acute distresses of others, now relapsed again into that desponding state of mind which her long absence from Willoughby, and his apparent neglect of her, unavoidably threw her into. She had confined herself a good deal to the house, since Montague Thorold had been so much with them, because there either Mrs. Elphinstone or the children were usually in the room, and she by that means avoided being alone with him; but now, as he was more engaged by the preparations for their departure (which he had undertaken to superintend), and in settling poor Elphinstone's accounts with his employers, Celestina again ventured out
of

of an evening, whenever she could escape unseen.

In one of these walks, along the edge of very steep rocks, where the scene presented only desolation : the dark and turbulent sea on one side, and on the other a succession of mountains, which seemed to have been thrown upon each other in some tremendous convulsion of nature, she turned towards the yet more dreary north, and reflected on the condition of those whom the poet describes as

“ The last of men,”

the inhabitants of Siberia, of Lapland, and those extreme regions where

“ Life at last goes out.”

“ Alas !”—cried she—“ if they have not our enjoyments, they suffer not from those sensibilities which embitter our days. Their short summer passes in laying up necessaries for their long winter ; and with what their desolate region produces, they
are

are content, because they know not that there are comforts and conveniences beyond what it affords them. Void of the wish and the power to observe other modes of life, they are content with their own, and though little superior in point of intellect to the animal from which they derive their support, yet they are happy, if not from the possession of good, at least from the absence of evil; from that sickness of the soul which we taste from deprivation and disappointment."

A deep sigh closed this short soliloquy; and, after indulging a little longer this train of thought, it produced the following sonnet:

THE

THE LAPLANDER.

The shivering native, who by Tenglio's side
Beholds with fond regret the parting light
Sink far away, beneath the darkening tide,
And leave him to long months of dreary night,
Yet knows, that springing from the eastern wave,
The sun's glad beams shall re-illumine his way,
And, from the snows secur'd, within his cave,
He waits in patient hope—returning day.
Not so the sufferer feels, who, o'er the waste
Of joyless life, is destin'd to deplore
Fond love forgotten, tender friendship past,
Which, once extinguish'd, can revive no more :
O'er the blank void he looks with hopeless pain ;
For him those beams of Heaven shall never shine again.

A few days after this, an interval of calm weather gave to Mrs. Elphinstone courage to determine on embarking : but the evening before that on which it was finally fixed that they should go, she told Celestina, with a solemnity of voice and manner that convinced her she was not to be diverted from her purpose, that she could not be satisfied to leave the island without visiting the spot where lay the re-

mains of her husband. Celestina, without much hope of success, represented to her how wrong it was to yield, or rather to encourage sorrow, unavailing to its objects, and injurious to those who were his living representatives, by depriving her of her calmness of mind when exertion was most necessary, and injuring her own health, now so particularly precious to them. To these arguments her poor friend replied, with melancholy composure, that she should suffer more in reflecting on her omission than she could do in fulfilling what she had persuaded herself was a duty. Celestina therefore agreed to accompany her that evening. Montague Thorold had already shewn her the place, and Mrs. Elphinstone desired to have no other witness to her sorrows, than the soft-hearted and pitying friend, without whose generous sympathy she would probably long before have sunk under them.

It was near two months since the death of Elphinstone, when this melancholy farewell visit was to be paid by his widow. A
calm

calm but fullen day, with an overclouded sky, threatening snow, was succeeded by a dark but mild evening. The distant sun had left a few lines of red light in the western horizon; and the moon, within a day or two of being at the full, edged with fainter rays the opposite clouds, through which it appeared not but at intervals. The unhappy widow, leaning on the arm of her tender friend, walked slowly and with languid steps, as she was guided towards the ruined chapel, and a universal pause of nature seemed to respect her sorrows! Not a breath of air wandered among the channels of the hills, and the water-falls murmured low and hollow at a distance; the sea was calm, and being low on the sands, was hardly heard; while the birds, and few animals who inhabited the land, were retired to their repose.

Around this little chapel, now more than half in ruins, a few rude stones were raised to the memory of the dead of former times. The grass and weeds concealed many, and

on the rest no figures but those of crosses rudely cut were now visible. Elphinstone had been interred within the walls of the edifice itself; his widow desired her friend to enter it with her, to shew her the place, and to leave her.

As they approached the spot, the ground sounded hollow beneath their feet, and a mournful echo ran round the damp walls. The moon, darting for a moment through the ruined stone-work of the dismantled window, shewed them a broken table that had once been the altar, on which some pieces of the Gothic ornaments of the chapel, and several human bones, were scattered; and near it, the newly turned-up earth, on which a few stones were loosely piled, discovered the grave of poor Elphinstone. Celestina could not trust her voice to point it out; but leading her friend to it, she immediately comprehended that there lay the remains of her husband, and fetching a deep sigh, she stopped at it.

“ I had

“ I had better not leave you, surely”—cried Celestina, mournfully.—“ I cannot bear to leave you in this dreadful place.”

“ Pray oblige me,”—replied her friend; “ it is the last indulgence I will ask; and I promise not to stay long.”

“ I will wait for you without, then;”—replied Celestina—“ and pray, dear Sophy, consider your children, and let it not be long that you indulge this sad propensity.”

She then went out of the chapel; and seating herself on one of the ruined monuments near its entrance, yielded to all the gloomy thoughts which the place, the hour, and the occasion inspired. “ Ah! who knows,”—cried she—“ whether I too may not have reason to lament, even as this poor mourner, whose groans tear my heart to pieces while I listen to them!—I hear her! she implores forgiveness of the shade of her departed husband, for all the involuntary offences she committed against him: she, whose whole life has been one course of suffering, solicits forgiveness of him to

whom those sufferings were owing: she forgets his faults towards her, and recollects only that he once loved her, that he was the husband of her youth, and that he is gone for ever; while she trembles for the future fate of him, whose errors she only remembers, to recommend them to mercy! Dreadful then is the final separation even from those, of whom though we have reason to complain, we have once loved: ah! what must it be when an eternal barrier is put between us and those whom we unreservedly and passionately love. Willoughby, if I have regretted so deeply our separation, what would become of me, should I ever hang over the grave where thy adored form moulders in the dust!—Oh! God! grant that I never sustain a trial like that!”

Overwhelmed by these sad thoughts, and terrified at the increasing darkness and fearful silence, which was broken only by the deep sighs of her unhappy friend prostrate on the grave of her husband, she
started

started up to recall her from her mournful employment, when Montague Thorold, breathless with haste and anxiety, approached her: she was glad to recognize him, and took the hand he offered her; while he cried, impatiently—"Wherefore is all this, my dear Madam; and where is your friend?"

Celestina led him to the place, snu-
dering as she approached, while Mrs. El-
phinstone, recovering herself by an effort
of resolution, and having perhaps disbur-
thened her oppressed heart and satisfied her
mournful propensity, agreed immediately
to go with them; and having turned once
more her streaming eyes on the spot as she
quitted the chapel, she suffered each of her
friends to take an arm, and lead her home
in silence; where Montague Thorold ad-
vised her and Celestina to take immediately
a few hours rest, as the tide would serve
very early in the morning, for their em-
barkation in the vessel, which now lay
ready to receive them.

They followed his advice: and, before day-break, on the twentieth of December, near seven months after their arrival in the Isle of Skie, they quitted it; and landing safely on the coast of Scotland, they proceeded, with very great fatigue, though fortunately without being intercepted by such heavy snows as they had at such a season reason to apprehend, to Edinburgh, where it was necessary for them to rest some days before they proceeded on their long journey to the other extremity of Great Britain.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

AS Mrs. Elphinstone was too much dejected to allow her to go out, Celestina, who had great pleasure in visiting antiquities, and whose active mind was perpetually in search of new ideas, was compelled either to relinquish these gratifications, or to permit Montague Thorold only to accompany her. He was generally so guarded in his conversation, that, though it was easy to see how much he suffered in suppressing his passion, Celestina had no reasonable ground of complaint. He found, however, at Edinburgh, that it was particularly uneasy to her to visit the places she wished to see without some other companion, and recollecting that one of the Professors was well known to his father, he made use of

the claim that acquaintance gave him, and by that means Celestina received all the attention and hospitality for which the Scottish nation are so justly praised. The gentleman to whom she thus became known, had several daughters, amiable and elegant young women: with them she saw all that the capital of Scotland afforded worthy of observation; with them she visited the ruinous chapel, and magnificently mournful apartments of Holyrood House, and gave a sigh to the fate of the lovely, luckless Mary, who was almost its last resident sovereign. Then parting with her newly-acquired friends with mutual regret, she proceeded on her road to England, nothing particular occurring on the way, for some time, except the slow but evident amendment of Mrs. Elphinstone's spirits, and the symptoms of increased attachment in Montague Thorold; who, if he loved her before with an attachment fatal to his peace and subversive of his prospects, now seemed to idolize her with an ardour bordering on

on

on phrenzy. In spite of the resolutions she had avowed to him, in spite of those he had himself formed, this ardent and invincible passion was visible in every thing he said and did. He seemed to have forgotten that he had any other business in the world than to serve her, to listen to the enchantment of her voice, to watch every change of her countenance. His whole being was absorbed in that one sentiment; and though he had promised not to consider the advantages which his own wild Quixotism, aided by accident, had thus obtained for him, as making the least alteration in the decided preference of Celestina for another, he insensibly forgot, at least at times, her unalterable affection for Willoughby; and seeing, notwithstanding all her attempts to conceal it, that she pitied him, that she was not insensible of his attempts to please her, nor blind to his powers of pleasing, he cherished, in defiance of reason and conviction (from which he fled as much as possible), the extravagant

travagant hope that the barrier, whatever it was, between her and Willoughby, would be found invincible; and that the time, though it might yet be remote, would at length arrive, when he should himself be allowed to aspire to her favour.

The human mind, however strong, yields too easily to these illusions, whence, at least, it enjoys the soft consolations of hope, and sees rays of light, which, though imaginary, perhaps are all we often have to carry us on with courage over the rugged way, too thickly sown with real, or, missing them, with imaginary and self-created evils.

It is therefore little to be wondered at, if Montague Thorold, so sanguine in temperament, of so little experience in life (for he was yet hardly twenty-two), and so much in love, should thus eagerly feed himself with hopes of its ultimate success, and be wilfully deaf to every argument which reason would have brought against the reality of the gay visions he cherished.

Celestina;

Celestina, pitying and esteeming him, was very anxious to reduce this unhappy and fruitless prepossession to the bounds of friendship and esteem, and though she at this time thought of Willoughby with so much internal anguish that she never on other occasions willingly named him, yet she now took occasion sometimes to speak of him, and purposely laid her train of conversation in such a way with Mrs. Elphinstone, as gave Montague Thorold to understand that her sentiments in regard to him who had first possessed and still was master of her heart, could never suffer any material change, or be transferred to another, even though she was sure that she was personally divided from him for ever.

After some days travelling, which the languor of Mrs. Elphinstone, and her extreme anxiety about her children, rendered tedious, the party arrived at York, and there it was determined to remain two days. Celestina, who had nobody to receive her at the end of her pilgrimage with peculiar delight,
was

was not very eager to finish it; Mrs. Elphinstone, seeing nothing but poverty and dependence before her, of which her mind, being enfeebled by grief, was little able to bear a nearer prospect, was yet less anxious; and Montague Thorold cared not how long a journey lasted which gave him, what he must at its termination lose, the happiness of being with, and of being useful to the mistress of his heart.

When they arrived at York, there was an appearance of snow; it fell with violence during the night, and by ten o'clock the next morning the north road was rendered impassable.

The travellers were well assured that in a day or two it would be sufficiently beat for them to proceed with safety, and as their original intention was to remain at least two days, the farther immaterial delay with which this circumstance threatened them, gave to none of them any concern.

The snow, however, continued to fall very heavily, and the cold became almost
insupportably

insupportably severe. The party were drawn round a good fire at the inn, and Mrs. Elphinstone had just put her children to bed, when an unusual clamour and bustle below attracted their attention. Horses were called for, and a loud voice was heard to say—"If four are not sufficient, my master will have fourteen rather than be stopped a moment."

"This is some matrimonial expedition," cried Montague Thorold, "or why all this haste?" The idea, which the ladies allowed to be probable, excited some degree of curiosity, and when the waiter soon after came in to lay the cloth for supper, Montague could not forbear enquiring if the horses which were a short time before so eagerly called for were not for the accommodation of a young couple hastening into Scotland. The man replied that the gentleman was going into Scotland, and had been stopped by the snow about seven miles off, the horses he had to his chaise being unable to draw him; but that he understood

understood he was quite alone, that horses and men had been sent to his assistance, and that he was expected there presently.

The man, who probably loved to hear himself talk, went on to inform them, though they now no longer felt any great degree of curiosity, that the gentleman's valet de chambre and one of the postillions, who had come forward (who were warming themselves at the fire below before they returned back as they were ordered), had declared that they were almost dead with cold; "but as for that, Sir," continued the waiter, "he says, that is, Sir, the *wallet de sham* says, says he, my master if once he've got a scheme in his head, 'tis not cold, no nor water, nor fire neither, as will find it an easy matter to stop him; and then, says he, as for fatigue to his own self, says he, or danger, or any thing of the like nature, or expence, though it cost him a hundred, aye or a thousand pounds, why my master, says he, minds it no more than nothing; 'tis all one to him;

him; yet to be sure, says he, he is a good master in the main, and no sneaker, neither in money, nor liquor, nor no other accommodation to servants."

"And pray," said Montague Thorold, "who is this courageous, bountiful, and accommodating gentleman?"

"I did not think to ask his name, Sir," replied the waiter, "but I can know in a minute." He then, without waiting for an answer, ran down stairs, and returning almost instantly, said that the gentleman was 'Squire Vavasour of Staffordshire.

"Vavasour!" cried Celestina in a faint voice, and turning as pale as death, "Good Heaven! to what purpose can Vavasour be travelling in such haste towards Scotland."

"Vavasour!" echoed Montague Thorold, his countenance betraying all that passed in his heart: "Vavasour! Ah! Miss De Mornay, it was to you he was undoubtedly going. Willoughby is returned

turned, and sends his friend to reclaim his betrothed wife."

"Sends his friend! oh! no, no," answered Celestina with quickness, "that cannot be: were Willoughby returned, he would not *send*; rather it is some sad news he has to impart, and I must prepare myself for it—I must bear it, be it what it may."

The cruellest anxiety now took possession of both Celestina and Montague Thorold; they both dreaded an explanation, though unable to bear the suspense. Thorold went down to see what he could gather from the men; but Mr. Vavasour's servant was gone back to meet his master, and the postillion had only come with him from the last post town. Celestina in the mean time now traversed the room, now went to the window, and now appeared to attend to the conjectures Mrs. Elphinstone offered, that perhaps this journey might in no respect relate to her, but might be owing to one of those sudden starts of caprice
in

in which Vavasour was known to indulge himself.

This state of suspense and conjecture, which is of all others least easy to be borne, did not last long, for in about a quarter of an hour the carriage, in which Vavasour himself was, arrived.

Celestina now debated within herself whether she ought to send to him, to inform him of her being on her way to England, or suffer him to proceed, whither she doubted not he was going, even to the Hebrides in search of her. This internal debate was however short: her extreme solicitude to have news of Willoughby superseded every other thought; and whether Vavasour was going to Scotland to announce her fate to her by the direction of Willoughby, or merely in consequence of some whim of his own, she knew that he in all probability could give her some intelligence of him of whom she most wished to hear. Montague Thorold, who trembled lest in consequence of this interview
all

all the gay dreams in which he had been indulging himself should be at once destroyed, would have represented to her some imaginary improprieties which his wish to find them raised in his mind.

Celestina, however, had, with all her candour and humility, a decisive spirit, the effect of her great good sense, which, when she had once examined and determined on any subject, did not leave her open to the trifling perplexities of feeble and unimportant debate. She considered, that even if Vavasour *was* going on some eccentric idea of his own to follow her into Scotland, it would be cruel and unjust to suffer him to pursue such a journey at such a season, and therefore steadily resisting all the representations of Montague Thorold against it, she addressed to him the following note :

“ Miss de Mornay presents her compliments to Mr. Vavasour, and having
“ learned by accident that he is at this
“ place,

“ place requests the favour of seeing him
“ to-morrow morning to breakfast with
“ Mrs. Elphinstone and with her at half
“ past nine.”

Montague Thorold, being unable wholly to prevent, thought he could at least impede the delivery of this note till the next day; but Celestina was too impatient to hear of Willoughby to be blind to the artifice which Montague was too much in love to manage very dexterously, and therefore quitting the room herself, she found one of the waiters, who she enjoined to give the note to the gentleman who was just arrived, as soon as he had done supper.

This was not perhaps very discreet: but Celestina thought much at the moment of Willoughby, and very little of Vavasour, and in her anxiety to hear news of the one, she reflected not on the way in which it might be conveyed by the other, who, after a long and cold journey, having finished his supper, was not likely at least to
be

be a clear and calm messenger, and a moment's reflection would have convinced her that he was not a man who from motives of delicate forbearance and polite deference would put off the interview to the time she had named.

No sooner was the note from Celestina delivered to Vavasour, than he ran up stairs with an impatience amounting almost to phrenzy, his eyes flashing fire, and his countenance expressive of the violent emotions with which he was agitated; he hardly noticed Mrs. Elphinstone, but casting a look of angry surprise at Montague Thorold, whom he immediately knew, he approached Celestina, took her hand, and eagerly kissing it, told her in a hurried manner that he was hastening to Scotland to give her intelligence of very great consequence, and to deliver her a packet from Willoughby.

“From Willoughby!” replied Celestina, so extremely affected by his abrupt entrance
that

that she was ready to faint. "Is he well? is he returned to England?"

"No," replied he, without seeming sensible of the nature of her sufferings, "not returned to England, or likely to return, but——"

"Is he married, then?" said Celestina, interrupting him in a still more trembling voice.

"Not yet, but I have a letter for you which——"

"Give it me," cried she, hardly able to breathe. He had it not about him, but ringing for his servant, gave him the key of his portmanteau, and bidding him bring a large sealed packet, which he said he would find there, the man immediately returned with it; and Celestina, without speaking to Vavasour, hurried away with it in breathless agitation, Mrs. Elphinstone, alarmed at her looks, following her in silence.

All this time Montague Thorold had remained leaning against one of the piers:
with

with contracted brows and clasped hands watching the countenance of Celestina, while his own changed from pale to red, from red again to pale. He had always returned the dislike which Vavasour had shewn towards him as much as his nature could return dislike; and this was increased by the abrupt and unfeeling manner in which Vavasour had executed a commission, that, whether it brought to her welcome or unwelcome tidings, demanded, he thought, more delicacy and more preparation. When Celestina and Mrs. Elphinstone were gone, he felt no inclination therefore to stay with Vavasour, who walked up and down the room as if expecting their return; but was preparing to leave it, when, as he crossed to the door, Vavasour, turning short towards him, asked how he came to be at York with Miss De Mornay.

“How I came, Sir!” replied Montague Therold with equal abruptness. “Have you any right, Sir, to enquire?”

“Yes,”

"Yes," replied Vavasour, contemptuously, "I have a right."

"To enquire into my actions, Sir?" interrupted Thorold; "surely not!"

"To enquire into those of Miss De Mornay, Sir, *I have* a right."

"Well, Sir, if she allows of that right, to her you may then apply; but you will be so good as to leave me at liberty to be at York, or wherever else it is convenient to me to be."

"Not with her, Sir, you must not; not with Miss De Mornay, be assured. As for the rest, pray understand, that were it not for the circumstance of your being seen in company with her, *I should* never recollect that such a person was in the world as Mr. Montague Thorold."

Thorold, though naturally of a gentle disposition, was little disposed to bear the contemptuous arrogance of any man: he therefore answered with more quickness, that it was an honour he could well dispense with, to be thought of at all by *such* a

man as Mr. Vavasour. The tone in which he spoke this, and the emphasis he laid on the words, *such* a man, provoked the haughty and impetuous spirit of Vavasour; and words rose so high between them, that Mrs. Elphinstone, who was only in the next room, came in, and extremely terrified at their violence, besought them to separate. Vavasour, whose passions were at all times too strong to suffer him to listen either to reason from others, or to his own, gave very little attention to her remonstrances; but Montague Thorold on seeing her extreme uneasiness, and on hearing the name of Celestina, became in a moment apparently calm; and assuring Mrs. Elphinstone that she had no reason to be alarmed, he addressed himself coolly to Vavasour, and said, that if he had any business with him he would be at his service in the morning: he then besought Mrs. Elphinstone to return to Celestina: and taking her hand led her out of the room, assuring her in a whisper, that he would

would not return that evening to Vavasour, nor have any farther contention with him. "Make yourself easy, therefore, my dear Madam," said he, "and tell me—how is our lovely friend? what are the contents of a letter which required so extraordinary a messenger?"

Mrs. Elphinstone answered, that Celestina had appeared in great emotion while she read the beginning of the letter, and then telling her that she should finish it in her own room, had left her, in increased agitation she thought, but without tears.

"And shall you see her no more to-night?" enquired Montague Thorold.

"I rather believe not," replied Mrs. Elphinstone.

"And do you think," said Thorold, "do you think, my dear Madam, that the agitation, the emotion you remarked, was the effect of joy, of grief——"

"Of grief, of disappointment, of regret, I think," answered she. "I believe Celestina is now convinced that every proba-

bility of her becoming the wife of Mr. Willoughby is at an end for ever.

“Then,” cried Montague Thorold, unable to repress the violence of his feelings; “oh! then there will be hope for me!”

There was something like the transports of phrenzy in the manner in which he uttered this, and Mrs. Elphinstone was shocked at it. “Be not too sanguine, Mr. Montague,” said she. “I do not believe that the affections of Miss De Mornay are to be easily or lightly transferred, but if they were, think of the powerful claims upon them that are using against your’s.”

“Claims! what claims?” cried he: “who shall dare to dispute with me an heart to which——”

“Nay, nay,” answered Mrs. Elphinstone, “this is all phrenzy and wildness. Do you not know that you have no claim, though I am willing to allow all you merit; and do you not see that Willoughby, in being compelled to resign her, recommends



mends his friend Vavasour to her favour, and therefore sends him hither."

"Vavasour!" cried he: "recommend Vavasour to her! And would Celestina, who, with all that dignified gentleness, has a great deal of spirit, with a proper consciousness of her own value; would she bear to be consigned, like a bale of merchandise, to a friend, and to such a man as Vavasour? Impossible! he dare not think of it; but I wish he may; for her insulted pride will mitigate the pain of her disappointed love, and she will be mine—the charmer will be mine."

The look, the manner in which this was uttered, encreased the concern of Mrs. Elphinstone, who, from her own recent and severe sufferings, had learned to dread any thing like romantic eccentricity. She laid her soft cold hand on the burning hands of Montague Thorold, as they were wildly clasped together—"My dear Sir," said she, in the gentlest accents, "I owe you a thousand obligations for all the atten-

tion you shewed me in my late calamitous situation, and ill, very ill, should I repay those obligations, if I did not try as a friend to mitigate these violent transports. Believe me, the heart of Celestina fixed in her early life to one object, is attached to that object with more than common firmness: Vavasour's frantic fondness, and your real merit, will, in my opinion, be equally indifferent to her; and I verily believe, that if Willoughby marries another, as I conclude he will, Miss De Mornay will never marry at all."

Montague Thorold could not bear this. The idea of rivalry had been painful; but the pain was mitigated by his knowledge of her character and of the character of Vavasour, which, with all its avowed libertinism, he knew Celestina could not even tolerate, and certainly not approve: but the idea of her living only for Willoughby, even when Willoughby lived for another, was insupportable; and since he was unwilling to own it was possible, he would
there-

therefore have been ready to quarrel with any body but Mrs. Elphinstone for supposing it probable: but to every being who was unfortunate, and especially if that unfortunate being was a woman, the kind heart of Montague Thorold overflowed with good-will and sympathy: he therefore checked himself; and saying, he should be impatient to hear of Miss De Mornay in the morning, he wished Mrs. Elphinstone a good night, and left her.

CHAPTER V.

IT was not till after two or three readings, with a palpitating heart—a heart so much agitated as hardly to leave her the use of her reason, that Celestina perfectly understood the meaning of Willoughby's letter, which ran thus :

“ The only apology, dear Celestina, that
“ the unhappy Willoughby has to offer for
“ his conduct is to relate to you all that
“ has befallen him since that fatal night
“ when he parted from you at Alvestone.
“ The emotions which I must feel while I
“ write, I will endeavour to suppress,
“ both for your sake and my own; it shall
“ be, if I can command myself, a history
“ of

“ of events rather than of the sufferings to
“ which those events have condemned me.

“ You know, that after the abrupt and
“ unaccountable note that I received, I
“ hastened to the inn at Exeter, where
“ I was informed some persons, who had
“ business of the utmost importance which
“ admitted not of a moment's delay,
“ waited to see me. The terms in which
“ the note was written were such as gave
“ me a strange alarm, though I knew not
“ what to dread. This uneasy astonish-
“ ment was not lessened, when, after much
“ appearance of mystery, I was introduced
“ to—Lady Castlenorth.

“ You know the woman, and can ima-
“ gine how ill her harshness, when irritated
“ by the malignity of disappointed pride,
“ was calculated to soften the blow which
“ it was her pleasure to give me herself.
“ She told me, that having heard I was
“ on the following morning to become
“ your husband, she felt it to be her duty
“ to save me from the horrors of such a
“ union,

“ union, by informing me that she knew
“ you to be the daughter of my mother,
“ the daughter of that Mr. Everard who
“ was my tutor, and that the woman she
“ had with her, who had been a servant
“ in the house at the time, could give the
“ most indisputable account of your birth.

“ Stunned as by a stroke of thunder, I
“ turned towards the woman, of whose
“ face as a servant of my mother’s I had
“ not the least recollection. I know not
“ what I said to her; I only remember
“ that she gave, in a confused and vulgar
“ way, an account of what she pretended
“ to have been witness to. I suffered her
“ to talk on, for my very soul was sink-
“ ing with anguish. My mother’s ho-
“ nour destroyed! my Celestina torn from
“ me! My soul recoiled from the idea as
“ from an execrable falsehood. Yet when
“ I remembered the solemn injunction
“ that beloved mother gave me in her
“ last moments to marry Miss Fitz-Hay-
“ man, the promise she drew from me ne-
“ ver

“ ver otherwise to unite myself—when
“ my agonized mind ran back to the dis-
“ pleasure she sometimes expressed at my
“ fondness and admiration for you—I
“ dared not, with all the pain and all the
“ horror I felt, I dared not throw from me
“ with indignation this odious intelligence;
“ I dared not load the hateful communi-
“ cators of it with the odium which would
“ have been dictated by my swelling heart,
“ had it not been checked by these sad
“ recollections, which pressed upon me
“ in despite of myself, and gave me some-
“ thing like internal evidence of the facts
“ I would very fain have denied.

“ There was, in the countenance of
“ Lady Castlenorth, something of info-
“ lent triumph which I could not bear.
“ She made a merit of her disinterested
“ conduct, and talked of virtue, and ho-
“ nour, and integrity, till I was blind and
“ deaf: she then threw out some reflec-
“ tions on my mother’s memory, which
“ roused me from the torpor of amaze-
“ ment

“ment and sorrow to resentment; she uttered some malignant sarcasms against you, and I flew from her.

“She had, however, completely executed her purpose, if it was that of rendering me the most wretched of human beings; and in quitting the house, which she did soon afterwards, had the barbarous pleasure of knowing that she had destroyed my peace for some time—if not for ever.

“To turn to you, Celestina, under the doubts which distracted me was impossible. To become your husband—so lately the fondest, the first wish of a heart that doated upon you, was not to be thought of while ideas of so much horror obtruded themselves on my mind: yet to leave you without accounting for my absence, to leave you to all the torturing suspense of vague conjectures, to leave you to suppose I had deceived and forsaken you, was cruel, was unpardonable: it was, however, what, after

“ after a long and dreadful struggle, I de-
“ termined to do. I might, indeed, have
“ put an end to your conjectures by deli-
“ vering you over to others more tor-
“ menting—by communicating the doubts
“ Lady Castlenorth had raised; but this
“ I found I could less bear to do than
“ even to leave you wholly in suspense.
“ Believing her capable of any thing which
“ revenge or malice could dictate, there
“ was reason, notwithstanding all my
“ trembling apprehensions, to suppose it
“ more than possible that she might have
“ invented the story, and have bribed the
“ woman with her to give evidence of it’s
“ truth. To this possibility my mind
“ clung with the eagerness of a drowning
“ wretch; and I could not resolve to sully
“ before you the memory of my angel
“ mother, which I know you hold in such
“ tender veneration; I could not deter-
“ mine to raise in your delicate and sensi-
“ ble mind doubts and terrors which
“ might make such fatal impressions as
“ might

“ might impede our union, even if the
“ fallacy of this invention to divide us
“ was detected. In a state of mind then
“ which I will not attempt to describe, I
“ at length determined to send for Cath-
“ cart, and without explaining even to
“ him the motives of my sudden journey,
“ to secure, if I could, your continuance
“ at Alvestone, and to set out myself to
“ discover the real circumstances of your
“ birth; and never to return till I had
“ the most thorough conviction that you
“ were not the daughter of my mother, or
“ till I could learn to consider you, if it
“ were so—only as a beloved sister.

“ Ah! Celestina! I little knew the task
“ I undertook; yet with anguish and de-
“ pression, to which no words can do jus-
“ tice, I set about it. My first step was,
“ to find out Watson, my mother’s old
“ servant, who had never, I knew, left
“ her for many years. I knew that after
“ her death, and on receiving the legacy
“ of fifty pounds that her mistress left her,
“ she

“ she had retired to the house of her son,
“ who was married and settled at White-
“ haven. I might have written to have
“ enquired after her; but then I must
“ have waited some days in suspense I
“ could not bear; and while I was in mo-
“ tion I felt my misery less, from an idea
“ that I was doing something to end it.
“ I sat out therefore on horseback for
“ Whitehaven, and on my arrival there
“ learned that she had been dead about
“ six weeks. This first hope of certainty
“ thus frustrated, it occurred to me that
“ perhaps among her papers there might
“ be some memorandums that would be
“ useful; and as she always hired and dis-
“ charged the inferior servants, and kept
“ an account of the time and terms of their
“ service in a book, I flattered myself that
“ I might find some date of the time
“ when Hannah Biscoe, who pretended
“ to have been in her confidence and to
“ have been entrusted with a secret of such
“ importance, really lived in the family.

“ I told

“ I told her son, that to see all the pa-
“ pers his mother had left, was of import-
“ ance to me. He readily brought all
“ he had. There were some books of ac-
“ counts, and some memorandums about
“ servants, but none that gave me any
“ light, or were of any importance to my
“ enquiry, for none went back above ten
“ years. The man told me there were
“ more; but that not knowing they were
“ of any consequence, or even supposing
“ them likely to be called for, he had
“ given them to his children, who had cut
“ them to pieces. ‘ I believe, however,
“ Sir, said he, that there are some letters
“ in a drawer of a bureau, which I re-
“ member to have seen during my mo-
“ ther’s illness: I will fetch them if you
“ think they will be of any service.’

“ I desired him to do so, and he brought
“ me about twenty letters: some of them
“ were from my mother, while she was in
“ London in the years 1779 and 1780,
“ and Watson was at Alvestone with you
“ and

“ and my sister, of whom she had, as you
“ well remember, the care on all occasions
“ where it was necessary for my mother to
“ be absent. You were then about nine,
“ and Matilda about eleven years old.
“ The only sentences of any kind of con-
“ sequence were these :

‘ I have no notion of any real danger
‘ from the landing of troops from the fleets
‘ of France and Spain. No landing can
‘ take place; and ’tis all nonsense and bra-
‘ vado. I thought you had more sense,
‘ Watson, than to catch the panic of the
‘ vulgar and the ignorant, which *they* ra-
‘ ther like to communicate. However,
‘ since you write so pressingly to know
‘ what should be done if any thing should
‘ happen, I give you an answer, first, that
‘ nothing will happen; and secondly, if
‘ you have any alarm, which a reasonable
‘ being would consider such, take *my* two
‘ girls and bring them up hither instantly.
‘ But I shall be down at Alvestone in about
‘ ten

‘ ten days, and nothing can happen within
‘ that time believe me.’

“ *My two girls*, was the only sentence in
“ this letter on which I could lay any
“ stress. *My two girls*! Well, and what
“ then? have I not heard my mother a
“ thousand times say, *my two girls*? *My*
“ *Matilda*, *my Celestina*, were names in-
“ discriminately used: *my children*; even
“ *my daughters*, were terms not unfre-
“ quent with her. Ah! little, little did
“ her generous and benevolent heart sup-
“ pose that *such* advantage might be taken
“ of that generosity—of that benevolence;
“ for now—even now—no—I do not, I
“ cannot, I will not believe that Celestina
“ has any other claim to her friendship, to
“ her protection, than what arose from
“ that generosity and benevolence. Now,
“ do I say?—can I say it? Oh heaven!
“ how dreadfully contradictory are the sen-
“ timents that agitate and tear my heart!

“ Let

“ Let me, however, recall my scattered
“ thoughts : and remember, that it is a
“ simple history of facts only, and not of
“ feelings, that I promised to relate.

“ Another letter was written to Watson,
“ when Mr. Everard, after a very tedious
“ illness, which had long confined him in
“ town, went down to Alvestone, in the
“ year eighty, for change of air, rather than
“ to his own parsonage, where some re-
“ pairs were then going on. This letter
“ was expressive of great solicitude and
“ anxiety : but from thence what could be
“ inferred? nothing, but that the dear and
“ benevolent writer was solicitous for the
“ health of a friend to whom she had long
“ been attached. There was not in this a
“ word on which the most invidious ob-
“ server could dwell; nor was there in
“ any other letter a syllable to give me
“ any confirmation of what I dreaded to
“ find. Still I procured from the person
“ who had succeeded to Watson’s effects,
“ every paper and every book that re-
“ mained;

“mained; but I found nothing; and re-
“turned to London as miserable, as dissa-
“tified as I left it.

“Nothing made me more wretched
“than the questions with which I was now
“persecuted. I fled from society; stopped
“at a small village in the neighbourhood
“of London, where I avoided every body
“who was likely to know me, and thought
“only how I might satisfy my own tortur-
“ing doubts, and escape those of others.

“The most obvious method seemed to
“be, to find out the woman who had ac-
“companied Lady Castlenorth, and ques-
“tion her, when she was no longer under
“the influence of her employer: but this
“I could not do without getting, at my
“uncle’s house, information which I knew
“not how to set about. To go there, was
“hateful to me: I could not now bear the
“sight of people whom I had never loved,
“and to whom I imputed all the misery I
“laboured under.

“My

“ My servant, Farnham, had been little
“ used to those sort of negotiations, and
“ knew not much better than I did, how
“ to ingratiate himself into the favour of
“ the persons, through whose means only
“ he could procure the intelligence so ne-
“ cessary to us. He went, however, about
“ it as well as he could; but all I learned
“ was, that Lady Castlenorth had, soon
“ after her journey into Devonshire, sent
“ the woman who accompanied her away
“ into her native country (which was either
“ Norfolk or Suffolk), and with so much
“ secrecy, that nobody knew whither she
“ was gone, or how she was provided for:
“ but Farnham, with some difficulty, drew
“ from the rest of the servants, with whom
“ he found means of conversing, that she
“ had boasted, in some moments of vulgar
“ exultation, that her fortune was made for
“ ever.

“ No clue, however, could I obtain, by
“ which I could find out this woman; and
“ after much fruitless enquiry, where the
“ art

“ art of the adversary with whom I had to
“ engage baffled all my assiduity, I deter-
“ mined to go to Lord Castlenorth, to state
“ to him the stigma that his wife had thrown
“ on the honour of my mother (his sister),
“ and to demand that I might have proofs
“ of the facts she alledged, such as she could
“ now give, or that she might acknowledge
“ the wickedness and injustice of her as-
“ persions.

“ I was not aware, till I conversed with
“ Lord Castlenorth, to how debilitated a
“ state, indolence, ignorance, pride, and
“ prejudice, can reduce the human mind.
“ His, however, was of so singular a cast,
“ that instead of being shocked at the injury
“ done to his sister's honour, he affected to
“ resent, in spite of his family pride, my
“ doubts of his wife's veracity, flew from
“ the point to which I attempted to bring
“ him, and we parted in mutual dis-
“ gust : at least I was disgusted, and more
“ wretched and more hopeless than before
“ I had made this attempt.

“ Every

“ Every effort to discover the retreat of
“ the woman failing, my next measure was
“ to go to the convent at Hieres. It was
“ owing to these cruel circumstances, Ce-
“ lestina, that I left you in doubt while I
“ remained in England; it was owing to
“ these, that I left England in the hope—
“ though it became every day more mingled
“ with apprehension—that I left England
“ without accounting to you for my con-
“ duct. Were these surmises groundless,
“ why should I empoison your delicate
“ mind? why should I fully, for a moment,
“ the sacred fame of my mother, by di-
“ vulging them? Were they found to be,
“ at length, too well substantiated, it would
“ be then time enough to inform you of
“ them.

“ On my arrival at Hieres, I went di-
“ rectly to the present Confessor of the
“ community out of whose care my mother
“ took you. I found him to be intelligent,
“ obliging, and officious. From him I
“ learned, that the present Superior was a
“ young

“ young woman of good family, who had
“ been compelled to take the veil, and who
“ would probably have very few real scru-
“ ples as to giving me all the information
“ she could.

“ I succeeded easily in my research, as
“ far as it depended on these two persons.
“ I found that the memorandum of my
“ mother’s having taken you out of the
“ convent, by the name of Celestina de
“ Mornay, remained; and I found, with
“ emotions on which I must not dwell,
“ that there was another memorandum of
“ expences, ‘ for the little *English* child,
“ received at the request of Madame de
“ P——’. Such is the literal sense of the
“ French words. Who then was this
“ Madame de P——? An old nun, who
“ had lived in the house above five-and-
“ twenty years, and who was the only
“ person who recollected any circumstances
“ of your reception, told me, that she
“ well remembered that this Madame de
“ P—— came from Bayonne, or some
“ part

“ part of the country in the neighbour-
“ hood of that town ; and that she was an
“ intimate friend of the then Abbess, and
“ her name, of which only the initials were
“ expressed in the memorandum, was La
“ Marquise de Pellatier.

“ I enquired of the old nun, if she
“ knew on what ground it was you were
“ represented as an English child? She
“ replied——that she knew no more than
“ that when first you were received under
“ the care of the Superior, you were said to
“ be the child of English parents, or at
“ least that one of your parents was of that
“ nation: but that soon afterwards this was,
“ by the Abbess’s authority, contradicted ;
“ it was forbidden to be mentioned in the
“ community ; and it was ordered, that
“ you should from that time be spoken
“ of as Mademoiselle de Mornay; while
“ intimations were given, that you were
“ a relation of her own; born of a con-
“ cealed marriage; and that your father
“ being dead, and your mother married

“ to another person, you were to be considered as belonging only to the community in which you were destined to pass your life.

“ Ah! Celestina, what food was here for those corrosive conjectures which preyed on my heart!—Having exhausted, however, every kind of information which it was here possible to procure, I set out for Bayonne, where some of the family at least of Madame de Pellatier were, I understood, to be found.

“ She had herself been dead some years. I met, however, with her son, a gay young man of four or five-and-twenty, from whom I could obtain nothing but a general confession, that his mother probably had, from the general tenor of her life, occasion in more than one instance to exercise the secrecy and kind offices of her friends, and very probably obliged them in her turn : and when I explained to him my reasons for the anxious enquiries I made, which I thought the only means

“ means likely to interest him for me,
“ he said, that he was *vraiment au desespoir*
“ at the little *embarras* into which I had
“ fallen: that la belle demoiselle might
“ be my sister, or might be his; that he
“ had not the least hope of being of ser-
“ vice to me in unravelling the mystery,
“ for he had destroyed all his mother’s
“ papers, in pursuance of her dying di-
“ rections, some years before, and did not
“ believe the slightest trace remained of
“ any connection with an English lady,
“ or an English family. I enquired where
“ his mother lived in the years 1770 and
“ 1771, which was about the time of your
“ birth; and where in the year 1772, the
“ time of your reception in the convent:
“ he replied, that she was then sometimes
“ at Paris, where she was believed to have
“ an arrangement with Count W——, a
“ German nobleman, sometimes at Pe-
“ zenas, and sometimes at Hieres. From
“ all this I could gather nothing to my
“ purpose; and Monsieur de Pellatier soon

“ quitting his house in the neighbourhood
“ of Bayonne to go to Paris, I returned
“ thither also, infinitely more unhappy than
“ before my research.

“ All I have related, Celestina, is so
“ little convincing, when it is put together,
“ that perhaps I ought not to lay any stress
“ upon it, when to such slight and unsatis-
“ factory ground of conjecture, is opposed
“ the character and the principles of my
“ mother : yet shall I tell you truly, that
“ the energy with which she pressed me
“ with her last words to marry Miss Fitz-
“ Hayman ; the displeasure she always
“ shewed at my expressing any partiality
“ towards you ; her grief at the death of
“ Mr. Everard, which it was easy to see
“ she never recovered ; some words which,
“ though I could not clearly understand
“ them, escaped her lips almost with her
“ last sigh, and in which the name of
“ Celestina seemed united with some ar-
“ dent prayer, or some earnest injunction,
“ while, in her cold, convulsed hand, she
“ pressed

“ pressed mine to her trembling lips ; oh !
“ Celestina ! those sounds I have since in-
“ terpreted into a confession of this fatal
“ secret. Still, still inarticulate as they
“ were, they vibrate on my heart : and
“ now, united with the story of Lady Cas-
“ tlenorth, and the circumstances I have
“ gathered of your being born of English
“ parents—all, all unite to render me
“ wretched.

“ Yet there is not the least likeness be-
“ tween you and my mother ; there is not
“ the remotest resemblance between you
“ and Mr. Everard, who had remarkably
“ strong features and very red hair : oh !
“ Celestina ! what am I to conjecture ?
“ what am I to do ? can I, ought I, on such
“ grounds, to resign you ? Can I ever learn
“ to consider you only as my sister ? Where
“ shall I go next ? how satisfy my doubts ?
“ how ever possess again a moment’s hap-
“ piness ?

“ Every other evil is light to this. Even
“ the disorder of my affairs, the necessity

“ I shall soon be in to sell Alvestone, is
“ hardly felt. On my leaving England,
“ I raised money at an enormous premium
“ in order to pay Vavasour what I could
“ not bear to owe him, uncertain as I was
“ what would become of me. This, to-
“ gether with my absence, has alarmed
“ some of my mortgagees, who talk of
“ foreclosing their mortgages ; while my
“ own neglect of my affairs has, in despite
“ of Cathcart’s assiduity, contributed to my
“ embarrassments. But what are these in-
“ ferior distresses, compared to the wretch-
“ edness of a heart, adoring Celestina, yet
“ afraid of indulging his passion lest it lead
“ him into guilt? Ah! every evil fortune
“ could inflict, but this, I could bear.

“ But again it is necessary to recall my
“ pen from the description of feelings to the
“ narrative of facts.

“ Lord and Lady Castlenorth and their
“ daughter arrived in the early part of the
“ summer in France. I was then absent

“ on

“ on the research I have related to you,
“ but heard they had been very earnest in
“ their enquiries after me at Paris; and on
“ my return thither, some months after-
“ wards, I received a letter from Lord
“ Castlenorth, earnestly desiring me to
“ join them at Florence or Naples. The
“ letter imported that the alliance he once
“ wished was no longer in question; but
“ that finding his health every day de-
“ clining, he wished to see the only male
“ relation he had, on the settlement of
“ some family concerns.

“ This invitation I ought not perhaps
“ on other accounts to have refused; but
“ the hope of being able to gain some far-
“ ther intelligence of the circumstances
“ which occupied my mind incessantly,
“ determined me at once to accept it.
“ I went then, and met them at Florence,
“ where my uncle received me with as
“ much over-acted civility, as when we
“ parted last he had treated me with super-
“ cilious scorn.

“ I found him, however, not more rea-
“ sonable than before: the prejudices that
“ had taken possession of his mind were so
“ strong that he was angry and amazed
“ that what made the whole business of
“ his life could be to any other person
“ matters of mere indifference. He talked
“ to me incessantly of remedies for the
“ gout, of the medicines he was taking,
“ and of their effects; told me how he
“ slept and how he eat; and read differ-
“ tations without end on chronic disorders
“ in general; and from this discourse he
“ glided by some link which escaped
“ me, into his other favourite science, he-
“ raldry. Oh! the quarterings and bear-
“ ings which I was compelled to affect
“ hearing; the genealogies I was dis-
“ tracted with; and the marriages and in-
“ termarriages to which I appeared to listen,
“ while in fact I knew nothing of what he
“ said, and only endured this sort of mar-
“ tyrdom in the hope of seeing Lady Cas-
“ tlenorth,

“ tlenorth, who on my first visits did not
“ deign to appear.

“ All these latter harangues were, I
“ found, intended to impress on my mind
“ the pride and prudence which would at-
“ tend a union with my cousin, his daugh-
“ ter, and the advantage it would give me
“ above any other alliance I could form.
“ My patient acquiescence was imputed to
“ returning inclination for this boasted
“ connection; and when I was thought to
“ be sufficiently impressed with the ideas
“ thus meant to be conveyed to me, and
“ to be weaned from the weakness I had
“ betrayed, I was admitted, without any
“ solicitation however on my part, to the
“ honour of seeing Lady Castlenorth and
“ her daughter.

“ The elder lady was the only one of
“ them with whom I wished to have any
“ conversation, and her love of hearing
“ herself talk obtained me this favour, in
“ spite of all the displeasure she had con-
“ ceived against me: but it was very dif-

“ difficult to bring her to converse on that
“ subject which alone interested me: she
“ would talk politics, or give me a differ-
“ tation on the nature of the soul, or on
“ the eruptions of Vesuvius; descant on
“ the age of the world, or on her *own*
“ age (if her auditors would allow her to
“ be not quite five-and-forty), but of Ce-
“ lestina she would *not* talk; and if ever I,
“ in spite of her evasions, introduced the
“ conversation, she affected to hear me
“ with horror, and to consider every men-
“ tion I made of a person whom she called
“ so connected with me, as the most inde-
“ licate and improper conversation with
“ which I could entertain her. She was
“ for the most part surrounded, when I
“ was admitted to her, with abbati, and
“ was the oracle of a circle she had herself
“ formed, in which it was generally im-
“ practicable to entertain her with any
“ other conversation than that she chose to
“ lead to.

“ Her

“ Her daughter, who had formerly received me with so much haughtiness, and who had since been offended in the tenderest point, a point too in which her extreme vanity had rendered her particularly susceptible, affected no longer the overweening pride which in our first interviews had been so repulsive, but a soft melancholy, which sits well enough on some people, but was in her more likely to move mirth than pity: she seldom spoke to me; but when she did, it was with the air of one whose just indignation was conquered by softer sentiments. I knew I never could deserve those sentiments from her, and therefore was very sorry to see them, even though certain they were feigned.

“ But it was here only I could hope to gain any information of the woman, Hannah Biscoe, who pretended to have lived with my mother near twenty years since. Lady Castlenorth evaded, with wonderful art, ever giving me any trace
“ of

“ of this circumstance, and of her daughter I knew it was in vain to enquire; but there was a little smart Italian girl, called Justina, who had attended on Miss Fitz-Hayman for some time, and who had been in England with her, and I took occasion, as often as I could see her, to say some obliging thing to her, and sometimes to make her a trifling present. Justina, in consequence of my taking so much notice of her, began officiously to put herself in my way; and I believe her vanity prompted her for some time to suppose I had very different motives for my attention than those with which I was really actuated.

“ But in a foreign woman of that rank even vanity usually yields to avarice. When I had obtained an opportunity of clearly explaining myself, Justina undertook to procure me a direction to the woman whom I was so solicitous to find. She produced it in about a week, but artfully evaded my question as to
“ how

“ how she came by it. I sent off my own
“ servant instantly with it, determined to
“ follow him myself if the information as
“ to her place of abode proved to be true.
“ I received an account from him that a
“ few days before his arrival at the house
“ in Suffolk, where she was said to live,
“ she had removed from thence, and the
“ people either did not know or would
“ not tell whither she was gone.

“ This seemed so like an artifice of
“ Lady Castlenorth’s to prevent my mak-
“ ing the enquiry which she knew I had
“ so long and so earnestly desired, that I
“ could now no longer doubt but that
“ Justina had betrayed me: but during
“ this disquieting suspense time wore away,
“ and you, Celestina—what did you, what
“ could you think of me?

“ I entertained the strongest hopes, that
“ since Lady Castlenorth so industriously
“ kept me from the person she had herself
“ produced as likely to give me authentic
“ and indisputable testimony, that she knew
“ her

“ her evidence would not bear investigation, and to this hope I eagerly adhered.
“ My mind, however, was too much irritated by the idea of such complicated treachery to allow me to keep terms with her as I had hitherto done: I was wandering about Italy all the time of Farnham’s absence: on his rejoining me, I went back to the residence of Lord Castlenorth, and very peremptorily taxed his wife with fraud. I denied that Hannah Biscoe lived with my mother at the period she pretended to have done so; and that left I should discover the deception, that she had been sent away from the place where I had with difficulty discovered her.

“ Lady Castlenorth affected the calm indifference of injured innocence, the proud consciousness of ill treated integrity; she affected to declare that she was desirous of my seeing this Hannah Biscoe, that she knew not of her departure from the place whither she went,
“ which

“ which was the house of a brother-in-law,
“ nor was in any way concerned about her;
“ but,” added she, rising and going to a
“ cabinet where she kept papers; ‘ you
“ shall presently be convinced that she did
“ live with your mother in the year 1770.”

“ She took out a letter, which I saw
“ immediately to be my mother’s hand.
“ It was directed to Hannah Biscoe at Mrs.
“ Willoughby’s South Audley-street, where
“ my mother’s town-house then was. These
“ were the words :

“ HANNAH,

“ I desire you will immediately, on re-
“ ceipt of this, go to Kensington, and deli-
“ ver the inclosed to the person for whom
“ it is directed, and let me know by the re-
“ turn of the post whether the orders I gave
“ in a former letter were executed, and
“ how every thing goes on there.

Alvestone,
April 26, 1770.

M. WILLOUGHBY.’

“ I returned

“ I returned the letter to Lady Castle-
“ north, and expressed myself very warmly ;
“ insisting upon it that from such evidence
“ nothing could be derived, or even
“ guessed at: but she bade me, with a
“ contemptuous smile, remember, that
“ when I questioned this woman at Exe-
“ ter, she had told me, that you were for
“ the first months of your life nursed at
“ Kensington, whither she went almost
“ every day to see you, and that at five
“ or six months old you were sent abroad ;
“ and when my mother went to the South
“ of France, on pretence of recovering
“ her health, eighteen or twenty months
“ after the death of my father, you were
“ conveyed thither, and there put under
“ the care of a friend, who placed you
“ soon after with the Superior of the con-
“ vent of St. Celestine, at Hieres, as a rela-
“ tion of her own.

“ The coincidence of this story, with
“ what I had heard before relative to Ma-
“ dame Pellatier, struck me with more force
“ than

“ than any thing I had yet learned. I
“ left the house of Lord Castlenorth more
“ miserable than I had ever been before,
“ and again set out for Provence, hardly
“ knowing why, and not caring at all
“ what became of me.

“ Ever since that period, Celestina, I
“ have been wandering from place to place
“ in search of information, which I cannot
“ obtain, and, which obtained, would cer-
“ tainly render me wretched, if, indeed,
“ any wretchedness can be greater than
“ that which in my present state of miser-
“ able uncertainty it is my lot to suffer.

“ Are we then, Celestina, are we related
“ by blood? and is there an invincible
“ bar between us? Was my mother, that
“ admirable, that excellent, and almost
“ faultless woman, capable of living in
“ a state of continual dissimulation as to
“ you, and of hiding one fault by another,
“ which might have been followed by con-
“ sequences so hideous to my imagina-
“ tion? Oh! Celestina, it seems sacrilege
“ to

“ to her memory to think it; yet her
“ aversion to my expressions of tenderness
“ towards you, her conduct in a hundred
“ instances I can recollect, her strong in-
“ junctions, the promise she extorted from
“ me to marry Miss Fitz-Hayman—a pro-
“ mise urged with such vehemence, even
“ in her last moments! Could the poor
“ consideration of pecuniary advantage in-
“ fluence her then? did it ever influence
“ her? and the repetition of your name
“ with her last breath, mingled with words
“ that might be a prayer for you, but
“ which I have since thought was possibly
“ the fatal secret which she determined to
“ divulge only in death. The sad recol-
“ lection of that scene, her countenance,
“ which I continually behold, her voice,
“ which murmurs still in my ears, all, all
“ contribute to empoison every moment
“ of my life, and to make that tender af-
“ fection, that ardent love, which was
“ once the joy of my existence and the
“ pride

“ pride of my heart, the severest curse with
“ which heaven can pursue me.

“ Yes, Celestina, unless I dared in-
“ dulse that fondness with which my
“ heart overflows, I would I could forget
“ you for ever, and determine never to see
“ you more, for I despair of ever seeing
“ you as I——Pardon me, I am lost in
“ the confusion of sensations I cannot de-
“ scribe; and at this moment I hope so
“ miserable a being does not exist on this
“ earth. Write to me, Celestina: you
“ have more strength of mind than I have;
“ you are not, like me, the sport of ago-
“ nizing passions. Write to me; tell me
“ what you would have me do farther to
“ unveil this sad mystery, or to throw it
“ from us for ever, if that may be. I
“ have told Vavasour what it appeared no
“ impossible longer to conceal from him:
“ he is warmly my friend, and you may
“ employ him in any way in which you
“ think he can be useful. Celestina, I com-
“ mit you to his protection! till—till.
“ when,

“ when, Heaven only knows; and I dare
“ not trust my pen with another word;
“ only I entreat you to write to me; and
“ may every happiness that virtue and in-
“ nocence, and excellence like your’s de-
“ serves, ever be the portion of my Celestina,
“ whatever becomes of the unhappy
[G. WILLOUGHBY.]”

Thus ended this long letter, and thus was explained the strange circumstances that had cost Celestina so many tears. But she wept not now: she read the letter over twice: her first tremulous emotion subsided; but her stunned senses had not recovered their tone. It was late; it was cold; her candle had burnt nearly out. She put the letter on her pillow; and unable to undress herself, threw herself on the bed in her clothes, and lay pondering on what she had read, on Willoughby’s situation and her own, till the tedious night was at an end.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

VAVASOUR, who had passed great part of *his* night over a bottle, was not, however, at all more disposed to sleep towards morning than if he had been in bed, but at half after seven o'clock he sent the house maid to know if Miss De Mornay was up, and, if she was, directed the servant to give his compliments to her, and let her know that he should take it as a favour if she would allow him to speak to her for a few moments before her other friends were assembled.

Celestina had but just fallen into an unquiet slumber, when she was awakened by the maid, from an uneasy dream indeed, but from a change of uneasiness. With her returning memory, all the purport

port of Willoughby's letter returned; and Vavasour's message added most painfully, the recollection that she must discuss it all with him.

She ordered him to be told, that she was not very well, and could not immediately attend him: then shaking off the heavy lassitude which uneasiness and want of rest had occasioned, she called to her aid all that strength of mind and rectitude of heart with which she was eminently endowed by nature; and having again read over Willoughby's letter, began to consider what she ought to do.

With a doubt of such a nature on his mind, she resolved, whatever it cost her, never to meet him but as his sister; unless, which was very improbable, the strong and bewildering circumstances which had given rise to such an idea could all be removed. With so much purity did she love him, that she felt, that were he happy with another, and his esteem and tenderness for her undiminished, she could be content through
life

life to find her felicity in witnessing his. She resolved, therefore, after much debate with herself, and some pangs of unavoidable regret, that since this dark and unpassable barrier was raised, either by nature or by artifice, between her and the only man she had ever thought of with fond partiality, she would never marry, but would leave him at full liberty to complete that union with Miss Fitz-Hayman, which might at once fulfil his engagement to his mother, wean him from that lingering fondness for her, which it was folly if not guilt to indulge, and retrieve his pecuniary concerns from those embarrassments which were now hastening to overwhelm him.

Having formed this heroic and proper determination, she endeavoured to compose her countenance, to quiet the agitation of her mind, and to meet Vavasour with that degree of calm spirit which she imagined, from past experience of his behaviour, such a meeting would require.

This

This, however, was easier to imagine than to execute. She wished, indeed, to meet him without witnesses, because she knew he possessed too little of that delicacy which would teach him to repress any part of his knowledge before strangers, as Mrs. Elphinstone and Montague Thorold were to him: but when she opened the door of the room where she knew he waited for her, the blood forsook her cheeks, her trembling hands refused the little exertion necessary to turn the lock, her feet refused to carry her forward, and she would have returned without speaking to him for that time, if he, who was eagerly waiting her approach, had not heard her light foot-steps in the passage, and opened the door while she yet stood hesitating at it.

He was struck by the sight of her swollen and heavy eyes, the languor of her air, and the paleness of her countenance; and his usual address, which had more of warmth and vivacity than elegance, was softened by the real concern of which he was at that
moment

moment sensible. He took her hand, which trembled within his, as he led her to a seat—"I am sorry,"—said he—"to see that you are not well."

Celestina tried to speak, but could not. Vavasour had but an indifferent notion of administering consolation, nor could he contrive to condole with her for what he secretly rejoiced at himself; so that, between his dissembled concern and his undissembled satisfaction, he sat a moment or two silent; and then remarked, that the letter he had brought gave a very good account of George's health.

Celestina, without having any very precise idea of what she said, answered faintly, "Yes:"—and by this time Vavasour added—"that it contained also, he supposed, like what he had at the same time received, the history of a devilish awkward, mysterious business."

Celestina, who found herself unequal to the conversation, thought it better to put an end to it at once and for ever. She, therefore, by an effort of resolution, com-

manded voice enough to say—"Mr. Vavasour, you understand undoubtedly, that every idea of the alliance between your friend and me, is at an end for ever. As for the reasons that exist against it, a thousand motives make me wish they may remain secret; from this moment, therefore, you will very much oblige me, by forbearing to speak of Mr. Willoughby otherwise than as my best friend, and by concealing from the world a secret, in which it can have no interest, but which will give pain to many to have divulged."

"Divulged!"—cried he, laughing:—"what then, do you suppose it is any secret?"

"To be sure I do"—she replied.

"Oh! yes,"—answered he—"that is mighty likely, when Lady Castlenorth has taken such pains to talk of it every where already."

"Lady Castlenorth!"—cried Celestina; a faint blush rising in her pale cheek.

"Aye, to be sure,"—said Vavasour, carelessly—"that she did months ago. Why don't

don't you know, that besides the interest she had in dividing you and Willoughby, because her daughter is in love with him it seems, she always hated his mother; and that death itself is no barrier against malice like her's."

"Do you think it probable, or possible, that this story may be entirely the effect of that malice?"

"Why faith, no: I own I do not. You know—at least people tell me so who do know, that it was whispered about a great many years ago, and even said, that Everard was privately married to Mrs. Willoughby. But what signifies talking about it,"—added he, seeing her again change colour—"you have just been desiring me to say nothing about it. George seems to me to have made up his mind about it: he will marry his cousin, and retrieve his estates, as was his first plan; and my fair Celestina"—and he took her hand—"will look out for somebody else to transfer those affections to that he resigns."

H 2

"No,

“No, Sir,”—said Celestina, withdrawing her hand hastily from him—“they are not, I assure you, so easily transferred.”

“I am glad to hear it,”—replied Vavasour, without being at all discomposed by her manner—“for then I hope this pedantic young fellow, whom I find here travelling with you, will not have the presumption to suppose *he* has any chance of obtaining them. Pray tell me—how comes he here with you? is he any relation of the people you are with?”

This was a question it was impossible for Celestina to answer ingenuously. The piercing and enquiring eyes of Vavasour, inflamed and fierce from the late hours and free use of wine the preceding night, were fixed on her face. She changed countenance; felt that she did; and again her complexion altered. The various emotions with which she was agitated, consciousness that she must no longer think of Willoughby as a lover, yet could never admit another to that distinction, consciousness,

too that Montague Thorold must appear, in the eyes of the world, to have succeeded to that place, and anger that Vavasour should thus presume, on the confidence of Willoughby, to question her with a freedom he had otherwise no pretensions to, all combined to affect, to distress, and to deprive her, for a few moments, of that presence of mind, which, from the strength and clearness of her understanding, was usually at her command.

Vavasour, who, from the time he found Willoughby must in all probability resign her, made no doubt of succeeding to her affections; who had no idea of the sensations which pressed on her heart, from his total inability to feel them himself; became irritated and impatient at the silence his own impetuosity had occasioned. He sat eagerly reading on her countenance the emotions of her heart, and interpreting them his own way: again he repeated his question—"How came young Thorold

H 3

with

with you? Is he related to these Elphinstones?"

"You must enquire of him"—Celestina was on the point of saying; but the fear lest a quarrel between them should be the consequence of her so answering, checked her: she tried, therefore, to evade the question.—Of what concern is it,"—said she—"how he came hither. We were talking of Mr. Willoughby. Pray tell me—is he aware that our supposed relationship is talked of? Does he know the pains Lady Castlenorth has been at to circulate the story?"

"'Tis impossible for me to know that," said Vavasour (as it really was)—"it is much more in your way to tell me, how this college boy came hither with you."

"I know no right you have to enquire about it,"—answered Celestina, faintly—"because I cannot see that it is a concern in which you are at all interested."

"You will give me leave then to make my own conclusions; or rather"—added he,
in

in a louder voice, on seeing Montague Thorold enter the room—"rather to interrogate the gentleman himself."

This was exactly what Celestina had been most solicitous to avoid: the impetuosity of Vavasour, the surprize and anger she saw flashing from the eyes of Thorold, her sleepless night and long agitated spirits, the fear of she knew not what consequences from these two inflammable spirits, and her inability to check or repress those over whom she had no pretence to assume any authority, were together a combination of cruel circumstances, which might have overcome a stronger mind than her's. Mrs. Elphinstone was dejected from situation, and languid from recent sorrow of her own: to her, therefore, Celestina would in any case reluctantly have applied; and now she could not leave the room to seek her, without leaving together two men, who seemed so highly irritated against each other, that the first moment of her absence would probably bring them to extremities.

To speak to Vavasour, was to address the winds or the sea: she saw that he was hardly sober, that he was incapable of feeling for her distress, or of listening to any thing but his passionate impetuosity: it was on Thorold alone she had any hopes of prevailing; but in the moment of her deliberation, this hope seemed escaping her.

Before she could determine on what to do, Vavasour had, in a manner at once contemptuous and hasty, addressed himself to Montague Thorold, and enquired how it happened that he was at York, attending on Mrs. Elphinstone and Miss De Mornay?

“How it happens, Sir!”—said Thorold—
“Is there then any thing so very extraordinary in it? May I not be at York, or at Canterbury?”

“Yes,”—replied Vavasour—“when you are Archbishop of either; and then you will be, for aught I know, in your right place; but at present I think you in the wrong one.”

“What

"What *you* think, Sir," replied Thorold, "is the last thing that ever can be of any consequence to me; and if my actions are, as I apprehend, of as little to you, I imagine we can find some pleasanter topic than either the one or the other on which to entertain this lady."

He then approached Celestina, who was, he saw, ready to sink from her chair; and softening his voice, said—"You are ill, I am afraid."

"No," replied she; "but I am alarmed and uneasy; and I beg of you," continued she, lowering her voice, "I beg of you to keep your temper, let Mr. Vavasour say what he will."

"I cannot promise that," said he in the same tone; "but I can promise never voluntarily to do or say any thing that shall give you a moment's pain. Do not be so distressed, I beseech you; let me find Mrs. Elphinstone. You tremble: you seem ready to faint."

H 5

"I am

“ I am indeed,” replied she, “ affected from numberless causes. If you will be so good as to call Mrs. Elphinstone, I will be much obliged to you.”

Thorold went immediately to obey her; and Vavasour approaching her, cried—“ I see how it is; that young fellow is to console you for the loss of Willoughby. Your partiality to him I always suspected, and am now too well convinced of it.”

“ Well, Sir,” cried Celestina, assuming, in some degree, her usual spirit; “ and admitting it to be so, I do not really understand by what pretence you call me to an account for it.”

“ By my own long and ardent affection for you,” cried he; “ of which, however you may now chuse to affect ignorance, you cannot have been ignorant. I sacrificed it to Willoughby’s prior claim, and to your visible attachment to him; but I am not humble enough to withdraw my pretensions in favour of such a raw boy as Montague Thorold.”

“ I am

“ I am obliged to you, Sir,” answered Celestina, “ for the predilection you avow in my favour: though it cannot *command* my affection, it demands my sincerity; and I therefore assure you, that though I am now perhaps at liberty, I have no intention of engaging myself again. I shall hope to be allowed to consider both you and Mr. Thorold as my friends, while I absolutely decline any preference to either.”

The pride of Vavasour was hurt extremely by this speech. Though he was not personally vain, yet he had from his infancy been so accustomed to have his own way, that opposition from any quarter was new and insupportable to him. Mrs. Elphinstone and Thorold at this moment entering the room, he for once checked himself; and breakfast being ready, he was invited to partake of it, which however he declined, but told Celestina, on retiring, that he must desire to see her again alone in an hour.

Celestina

Celestina now attempted to repress the various emotions with which she was agitated, and to quiet the throbbings of her heart. She sat down to the table, and tried to eat, but could not; while Montague Thorold, watching with eager fondness every turn of her countenance, officiously tried to engage her to partake of the breakfast that was before her.

As soon as she could, however, she withdrew; and after a moment's pause alone, her scattered and oppressed senses were collected enough to bring before her all that had happened, and tears, which she had not hitherto been able to shed, came to her relief.

Her reason too, came to her assistance, and strengthened the resolution she had formed after her first perusal of Willoughby's letter. But though she was able to decide on what she ought to do herself, she saw many painful circumstances likely to be created by the violence of Vavasour, and the impossibility of prevailing either
on

on him or on Montague Thorold to leave her and Mrs. Elphinstone to pursue their journey with the other; or, what she would still have preferred, of continuing it without the attendance of either.

When the mind is oppressed with any heavy affliction, the less serious evils, which at other times it can repel or submit to, are felt with painful impatience. Mrs. Elphinstone, drooping and depressed from her past sufferings and future apprehensions, could no longer interpose to check the impetuosity of two young men, each of whom thought himself at liberty to attend on Celestina: while Celestina herself, who never meant to encourage either, and whose heart was so recently wounded by the dread of having lost that protection on which she was wont with fondness to rely, was yet more unequal to the exertion which was necessary to part these men, who were determined to look upon each other as rivals, or to keep them within the bounds of civility

vility if they persisted in remaining together.

Anxious to proceed towards the house of Cathcart, and to put her children under the care of her brother, while she herself tried to enter on some mode of life by which to procure them a subsistence, Mrs. Elphinstone became impatient of any farther delay; while Celestina, though equally anxious to get forward, trembled at the thought of a journey, which she foresaw would produce a quarrel, and perhaps a duel, before they had proceeded three stages.

Sometimes she thought of leaving the whole party abruptly, and going on as speedily as possible alone: but besides her unwillingness to leave Mrs. Elphinstone, she foresaw that if she did, this Vavasour would follow and overtake her; and Thorold would hardly content himself with attending her friend, while certain that Vavasour was with her. After much consideration, therefore, nothing seemed to remain,
but

but to endeavour to prevail on Thorold to go forward without them; than which, nothing seemed much more unlikely to succeed, unless it was the same attempt on Vavasour. She felt, too, a reluctance in asking a favour of Thorold, which he might interpret as encouragement she never meant to give him; and was afraid that the assurances she must make him in regard to her total indifference towards Vavasour, might afford him reason to hope, that towards him she would be less inexorable.

It was necessary, however, immediately to make the essay; and therefore sending for Mr. Thorold, she with trembling hesitation told him, that the letters brought by Mr. Vavasour had been decisive in regard to ending the intended alliance between her and Mr. Willoughby. But she had hardly uttered the word Willoughby, before the countenance of Montague Thorold was animated with all the warm hopes to which this intelligence gave birth. She saw it with concern; and with as much resolution

tion as she could, besought him to attend to her, while with a faltering voice, and her tears with difficulty repressed, she went on—"That I shall now never be the wife of Willoughby is certain: but do not misunderstand me; I have determined never to be the wife of any other person. I shall go, for the rest of the winter, to Lady Horatia Howard, and afterwards retire to some village as remote as possible from that part of England where I once expected to pass my life. This resolution is unalterable. But though I never can return as you wish the favourable sentiments with which you have honoured me, my friendship, my gratitude, my esteem, it is in your power to secure and——"

"Friendship! gratitude! esteem!" cried Montague Thorold. "Can I be content with such cold words: I, who can never for an instant disengage my thoughts from you; I, who worship your very shadow, and who cannot bear the thoughts of quitting you even for a moment! Oh!

Celestina!

Celestina! if ever the most pure and violent love deserved a return——”

“Forgive me,” cried Celestina, “if, in my turn, I interrupt you. Do you not mistake your sentiments, or, by an abuse of terms, call a transient liking by that name which ought to belong only to that refined affection of the heart which leads us to prefer the happiness of another to our own, and to sacrifice every inferior consideration to the sublime pleasure of promoting that happiness.”

“Heaven and earth!” cried Thorold, impetuously, “and do I not feel that sentiment in all its purity for you? Would I not lay down my life to procure you any real—almost any imaginary good?”

“Prove it,” interrupted Celestina, “prove it by obliging me in the request I am going to make: a request in which I must not be refused, and which, before I make it, you must absolutely promise to grant.”

“I promise,”

“ I promise,” returned Thorold, who had at that moment no idea whither her request tended, “ I promise to obey you, even though you desired my death. If the sacrifice I make has any merit in your eyes, how cheaply would your approbation be purchased even by the loss of existence !”

“ All that is very absurd and very wild,” replied Celestina. “ What I ask you can easily do, and ought to do without reluctance.”

“ Name it,” cried he, “ and see how well I can obey you.”

Celestina then told him, that Vavasour, fancying his friendship with Mr. Willoughby gave him a right to attend her, meant, she feared, to go on with her and Mrs. Elphinstone to London : “ And from the dialogues which have twice passed between you and him,” added she, “ there is reason to apprehend, that your continuing together may be attended with very unpleasant consequences : neither Mrs. Elphinstone nor I have courage to encounter the
fort

fort of contention which may arise between you: and to avoid the hazard of it, allow us to thank you for all the trouble you have taken for us, and now to bid you adieu till we meet again in Devonshire.

Montague Thorold, who, from the moment he understood her had listened with impatience, now protested that the promise he had just given could not be binding in an instance that must be as injurious to his honour as cruel to his feelings. "Why should you suffer this Mr. Vavasour," said he, "to force himself upon you, while you drive me from you? What is this chimerical claim that he derives from Willoughby, who has resigned his own; and how poor and spiritless must I appear, who having been permitted that of seeing you thus far on your journey, consent to resign to another the honour of attending you to the end of it: to another, who assumes a right no better founded than my own; and to whom I am to give place for no other reason but because he rudely demands

demands it. You would despise me, Madam, and I should deserve to be despised, were I capable of so mean a desertion."

This was exactly what Celestina feared; but persisting in her resolution to escape the alarm to which she must be subject from Vavasour and Montague Thorold's being together during the journey, she told the latter very calmly, that unless he consented to oblige her, and go forward, under pretence of being obliged to return home, that their acquaintance must here end for ever.

Even against this fear, his reluctance to yield, or to appear to yield the right of attending her, to Vavasour, awhile supported him. The dread, too, least Vavasour should now succeed for himself, and that he should see those hopes destroyed for ever which he so fondly cherished since Wilmoughby was out of the question, made him resist still more forcibly the injunctions Celestina desired to lay upon him. At length his fear of offending her, his real
love

love for her, and the sight of her uneasiness; her assurances that Vavasour never would have any particular interest in her favour (though at the same time she bade him understand that he had himself no better claim), and his wish to shew her how much he preferred her satisfaction to his own, prevailed upon him to sacrifice his pride and his fears to her entreaties; and making himself acquainted with the place where she was to be with Mrs. Elphinstone in London, where he obtained permission to attend her as soon as she arrived, Montague Thorold, though still reluctantly and with great compulsion on himself, departed alone, and on post horses pursued his way to London.

Having thus prevailed on Thorold to depart, Celestina again sat down to recollect her fatigued spirits. She had some hours before determined to write to Lady Horatia Howard, and accept the invitation so repeatedly offered her, as soon as she saw Mrs. Elphinstone safe in the protection

tection and assistance of Cathcart, who was to meet them in London.

This letter, therefore, she wrote and forwarded; and as neither the weather or any other circumstance was now likely to render their progress hazardous, Mrs. Elphinstone agreed that they would set out at a very early hour the next morning.

The day, however, was of necessity to be ended where they were; and it was very certain that Vavasour would pass it with them. He had ordered for them every thing they were likely to have occasion for in a stile infinitely superior to what they would themselves have thought of; and when they met at dinner, he received them as his guests, and when his natural vivacity was heightened by that sort of triumph that he felt, on finding that Thorold was gone, his exulting spirits were such as to be cruelly oppressive both to Mrs. Elphinstone and Celestina.

Incapable of entering into *their* feelings, he had no idea of repressing his own. He
fancied

fancied there no longer existed any obstacle to his project in regard to Celestina; and as that project had long been the first of his heart, and had become doubly important from the opposition it had met with, he concealed no part of the pleasure he felt at what he fancied the absolute certainty of its immediate accomplishment.

This was conduct that was insupportably distressing to Celestina. He spoke without scruple, of the resignation Willoughby had made of her hand, and seemed to have as little delicacy as to the occasion of it. Of an attachment to him, abstracted from every idea of becoming his wife, Vavasour had no idea; and Celestina had no courage to urge it, so entirely did his want of feeling, and the proud certainty he shewed of his own success, overwhelm her. All she could do was, to entreat Mrs. Elphinstone not to leave her with him, and to assist her as much as possible in attempting at least to check that assuming manner, for which neither her former friendship for Vavasour,
nor

nor the regard Willoughby had for him, could, in her opinion, offer any apology.

Fortunately, however, for both her and her friend, two young men of fortune, much acquainted with Vavasour, arrived at the inn early in the evening, and seeing his servants, enquired for him, and were shewn into the room almost as soon as dinner was over. Celestina and her friend took the earliest opportunity to withdraw; and Vavasour's attention to his guests over their wine, delivered them for the rest of the evening from his company.

He had taken care to inform himself of all that related to their journey the next day. But eager as he was to have Celestina in the chaise with him, he was compelled to desist from the request he at first ventured to make, on her representing the impossibility of her leaving Mrs. Elphinstone; to whom, though Vavasour heartily wished her once more in the Hebrides, he had at length the complaisance to offer his place in his own chaise, as being
more

more commodious than the hired ones to be found on the road ; and agreed, on her acquiescence in that arrangement, to follow himself in a hack chaise with his servant.

The gentlemen who had passed the evening with him at the inn, were not less fond of the pleasures of the table than he was himself ; and their orgies had been prolonged till it was no longer worth while for him to go to bed. With a very little alteration of his dress, therefore, and with a great deal of wine still in his head, he was ready in the morning to set out : but such was his appearance, and such his manners in consequence of his debauch the preceding evening, that Celestina was more than ever solicitous to avoid him ; and had it been possible for her to have thought of him before with the slightest degree of partiality, his looks and his conversation of this morning would have filled her with terror and disgust.

As she travelled on, however, by the

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side

side of her dejected friend, who had no spirits for conversation, she could not, amid all the reflection on her own circumstances, which filled her mind, avoid considering, with melancholy regret, the situation of this young man, who, with some talents and many virtues, was thus yielding to the wild current of passion and vice, and destroying his constitution and his fortune before he knew the value of either. She then with mournful recollection contrasted his character with that of Willoughby, who had once all his vivacity tempered with so much sweetness, so much attention to the feelings of others; who had all his generosity of spirit and openness of heart, without any of his careless dissipation; and whose brighter talents were not obscured by vice, nor degraded by folly; and as all his virtues, all his amiable qualities were enumerated, her heart felt all the acuteness of sorrow, in remembering too, that under their influence she had lost the hope of passing her life; yet the cruel pain of the
reflec-

reflection that these hopes were now at an end, was immediately mitigated, when she considered, that this she might perhaps still do, as his sister and his friend; but her reason, however it began to recover its tone, could never say any thing to her that for a moment taught her to reflect with pleasure or even with tranquillity, on the thoughts of his being united to Miss Fitz-Hayman.

On perusing Willoughby's letter, which she had now acquired courage to study more minutely; she saw with new uneasiness, what, in the first tumult of her spirits had escaped her, or at least made but a slight impression—that he recommended her particularly to the care and protection of Vavasour; and that, as he had probably intimated the same trust to Vavasour himself, she should find it very difficult to disengage herself from his attendance.

The longer she dwelt on Willoughby's expressions, the more she apprehended he was but too well convinced that the whole

story of their relationship did not originate with Lady Castlenorth. She foresaw, that while even the shadow of a doubt remained, their union never ought to be thought of: but having nobody with whom she could properly discuss the various and contradictory ideas on this bewildering subject, that passed through her mind, she looked forward with earnest impatience to the hour when she should receive the maternal counsel and soothing consolation which Lady Horatia Howard alone was likely to afford her.

The journey, however, was to be performed; and though she carefully avoided, during the two days that it lasted, being alone with Vavasour, yet she suffered extreme pain from the increasing conviction that he presumed on Willoughby's total resignation of her, and openly declared that he thought himself a candidate for her favour, whose fortune and pretensions of every kind rendered him secure of success.

At length the party reached London, and Cathcart received his sister and her friend

friend at the lodgings he had prepared for them, on being informed of the time of their arrival.

The meeting between him and Mrs. Elphinstone was too affecting to the already depressed spirits of Celestina. She retired early to her own room, having with difficulty prevailed on Vavasour to quit her, and there endeavoured to acquire steadiness to talk over with Cathcart, the next morning, the purport of Willoughby's letter; and then to take leave of him and her poor dejected friend, as Lady Horatia, Howard, had received with avidity the information of her intended visit to her, and was to send her coach for her at one o'clock on the following day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE morning at length arrived, and the friends who had so long found all the consolation their circumstances admitted of in being together were now to part; uncertain when, or if ever, they were to meet again. Mrs. Elphinstone, sinking as she was under oppression of many present sorrows and future apprehensions, yet found them all deepened by the loss of Celestina, who had so generously assisted her in supporting them: and Celestina felt, that when to soothe the spirits and strengthen the resolution of her friend was no longer her immediate task, she should dwell with more painful and more steady solicitude, on her own singular and unfortunate situation.

Cathcart,

Cathcart, warmly attached as he was to both, from gratitude and from affection, had no power to speak comfort to either. Early in the morning he had met Celestina, and gone through Willoughby's letter: but though his mind sometimes strongly resisted the idea of that relationship, of which it spoke, he had nothing to offer against it; and could only sigh over the incurable unhappiness with which he saw the future days of friends he so much loved would be clouded.

Silently they all assembled round the breakfast table; but nobody could eat. Cathcart tried to talk of Jeffy, of his house, of his farm, of his fortunate prospects, and of his sister's two little girls, whom he had taken home, but there was not one topic on which he could speak that did not remind him of the obligations he owed to Celestina and Willoughby, nor one idea which arose unembittered with the reflection, that they, to whom he was indebted

for all *his* happiness, were themselves miserable.

About twelve o'clock Vavasour came into the room in his usual way; enquired eagerly of Celestina when she went to Lady Horatia Howard's, and when he could see her there; and without waiting for an answer to his enquiry, told her that he had that morning met Sir Philip Molyneux, and that Lady Molyneux had been in town about a week. Every body who were related to Willoughby was interesting to Celestina; and from Lady Molyneux she had always supposed more might be collected than from any other person: but now her mind was too much oppressed and too much confused to allow her to distinguish her sensations, or to arrange any settled plan for her future conduct towards Lady Molyneux. She received Vavasour's information, therefore, with coldness; and indeed her manners towards him were very constrained and distant, which he either did not or would not notice; rattling on in
his

his usual wild way, though he saw the dejection and concern of the party; a circumstance that more than ever disgusted Celestina, who began some time before to doubt whether the credit which Vavasour had for good nature, was not given him on very slender foundations: for to be so entirely occupied by his own pleasures and pursuits, as to be incapable of the least sympathy towards others, to be unable or unwilling to check, for one moment, his vivacity, in compliment to their despondence, seemed to Celestina such a want of sensibility, as gave her a very indifferent opinion of his heart.

Mrs. Elphinstone quitted the room to make the last preparations for her departure: but Cathcart, who had settled every thing before, remained with Celestina and Vavasour. He would have given the world to have passed these moments in conversation with her; but the presence of a third person, and especially of Vavasour, put an end to all hope he had of an opportunity of
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explaining to her, with that tenderness and caution, which the subject required, some circumstances relative to Willoughby's fortune, which had lately come to his knowledge. New embarrassments seemed threatening him; and a law-suit, involving part of the property which belonged to Alvestone estate, seemed likely to increase these embarrassments; while the mortgages were gradually undermining the estate itself; and the absence of the master increased the impatience and mistrust of those who had claims upon it.

All this, Cathcart thought Celestina ought to know; yet in their first interview that morning, he had not courage to tell her of it, and now Vavasour left him no chance of doing it; for while he yet deliberated, the coach sent by Lady Horatia Howard stopped at the door, and the moment was come in which he was to take his leave of her.

He took her hand and kissed it with an air of grateful respect; but he could only say—

say—"I shall write to you in a few days, and, I hope, give you a good account of my sister and of Jeffy."

"I hope you will," returned Celestina, faintly.

"And," added he, "you will of course like to hear of all that passes material in our neighbourhood?"

"Certainly I shall," replied she. "Adieu, dear Sir. I cannot *say* much, but you know what I feel for *you* all."

Vavasour had taken her hand to lead her down stairs; but she disengaged it from him, and said to Cathcart, as she gave it to him—"Let us go to your sister." He led her to the door of the room; where, at that moment, Mrs. Elphinstone entered, pale and breathless: her eyes were heavy, and fixed on Celestina, but she did not weep. Celestina's tears, however, were more ready, and, as she embraced her friend, they choaked the trembling adieu she would have uttered, and fell in showers on her bosom. The emotion was too painful;

ful; and Cathcart, desiring to end it for both their sakes, disengaged his sister gently from the arms of the trembling Celestina, while Vavasour again seizing her hand, hurried her down stairs, and as he put her into the coach, told her he should call upon her the next day. She would have desired him not to do it, as a liberty he ought not to take in the house whither she was going; but before she could sufficiently recover herself to find words, the coach was driven away, and in a few moments she found herself at the door of Lady Horatia Howard, in Park-street, Grosvenor-square, and it became necessary for her to collect her spirits, to acquit herself as so much kind attention deserved.

Lady Horatia received her with unfeigned pleasure, and with a degree of maternal kindness that set her almost immediately at ease with herself. She was put into possession of her apartment, and bade to remember that it was her's as long as she would occupy it, and that her time was always

ways to be her own. "I am going out," said Lady Horatia, "to dinner to-day. I have a great notion you had rather dine at home?" Celestina owned she had. "Be it so, then," replied she: "and whenever you prefer being at home to going with me, I shall be pleased at your using that freedom, without which such a situation as I am able to offer you would be not only of no value, but a species of slavery." While she said this in the kindest manner, Celestina observed that she looked very earnestly at her eyes, which were red with weeping; and examined, with a kind of mournful enquiry, her features, which bore traces of the concern she had felt in parting from her friends; and having thus examined her countenance some time, her own, which was remarkably expressive, assumed a look of surprise tempered with concern; and then, as if she checked herself, she rang for her woman to receive orders about Celestina's dinner, and while they remained together,

together, she gave the conversation a more general turn.

When Celestina was alone, she ran over in her thoughts the transactions of the last month, and wondered what Fate would do with her next. But not of herself alone she thought: Willoughby, unhappy and unsettled; his mind thrown from its balance by disappointment; his talents lost in the bewildering uneasiness of uncertainty, and his temper injured by the corrosive anxieties of pecuniary inconvenience; he, who had such a mind, such a heart, such talents, such a temper; who deserved every happiness, and yet had hitherto known none; Willoughby, wandering about the world to obtain confirmation of a fact, which, when known, would only complete his misery; was an object from which the thoughts of Celestina could never a moment escape: and a thousand times she wished she had never been born, since to her, to whomsoever she owed her birth,

birth, Willoughby certainly owed his unhappiness.

It was time to consider of obeying the injunction he gave her, towards the close of his letter, to write to him; but on this subject she determined to consult Lady Horatia Howard, as well as to ask her advice in what way she should act in regard to Vavasour, whose importunities she dreaded, yet from whose visits she knew not how to disengage herself.

Under such protection, however, she knew that much of the inconvenience she must in other circumstances feel from Vavasour's behaviour would be obviated; and that the sense as well as the situation of Lady Horatia would prevent that improper familiarity which, when she was only with Cathcart or Mrs. Elphinstone, whom he looked upon as inferior and as dependent, it was too much his nature to assume.

With more complacency, she thought of Montague Thorold, and always of his father with a degree of affectionate reverence.

rence. As to the young man, though her heart never admitted, in regard to him, the slightest tendency towards that sort of partiality which could ever grow into love, yet she had received so many marks of real and ardent attachment from him, she thought so well of his talents, and so much better of his heart, that she could never divest herself of solicitude for his welfare. Perhaps—for in what heart, however pure, does not some such weakness lurk—perhaps, the stories she had heard of his former universal propensity to form attachments, and which were intended to prejudice her against him, had an influence on her mind of which she was herself unconscious, and that her self-love, though no human being ever appeared to have less, was gratified by having thus fixed a man so volatile and unsteady, though she never could, nor ever had given him reason to suppose she could, return the passion she had thus inspired.

While there remained any hope of ever seeing Willoughby such as he had once been,

been, she had felt an utter repugnance to suffer the assiduities of Montague Thorold; but Willoughby's apparent neglect of her for some time before she left the Isle of Skie, and the little probability there now was that they could ever meet in peace, since the receipt of his letter, had gradually and almost insensibly accustomed her to the attentions of Montague Thorold: and though she felt for him nothing like love, she could not help being sensible of a great difference in her sentiments towards him and towards Vavasour. One seemed to live only to obey and oblige her; the other, presuming on the advantages of fortune, or on those which Willoughby's friendship gave him, appeared rather to demand than to solicit her regard—rather to resent her neglect of his suit, than court as a favour her acceptance of it: and if Celestina had any fault, it was a sort of latent pride, the child of conscious worth and elevated understanding; which, though she was certainly obscurely,
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and possibly dishonourably born, she never could subdue, and, perhaps, never seriously tried to subdue it. She felt, that in point of intellect she was superior to almost every body she conversed with; she could not look in the glass without seeing the reflection of a form, worthy of so fair an inhabitant as an enlightened human soul; and could she have been blind to these advantages, the preference Willoughby had given her so early in her life would have taught her all their value.

It is not the consciousness of worth that is offensive and disgusting, but the tribute of respect that is demanded of others who have perhaps no such conviction, and of whom it is therefore unreasonable and arrogant to expect that they will acknowledge what they cannot perceive. Nobody was ever yet eminently handsome in person, or eminently brilliant in intellect, who did not feel from self-evidence that they possessed those advantages; though many, from the infirmity and weakness of their tempers,

pers, fancy they exist where none but themselves can find any shadow of them.

Good sense, one prominent feature of which is a due attention to the opinion and to the self-love of the rest of the world, will rarely suffer those who possess it to obtrude even real advantages on the notice of others; and without good sense, little distinction appears between the real bloom of youth and beauty and the factitious charms purchased at a perfumer's: both are, if not equally disgusting, equally devoid of all that can make them estimable or valuable. Of this good sense, Celestina possessed such a share, that conscious as she was of that superiority of which she was continually told, no village girl had ever more unaffected simplicity of manners; and while her mind was irradiated by more than common genius, and her knowledge very extensive for her time of life, she was in company as silent, and as attentive to the opinion of others, as if she had possessed only a plain and common understanding, with

with no other cultivation than what a common boarding school education afforded.

Her pride, therefore, so moderated, was rather a virtue than a blemish, and taught her to value herself, but never to despise the rest of the world.

There was about her, too, much of that disposition which the French call *ameneté*: a disposition to please by seeming interested for others; by entering into their joys and sorrows, and by a thousand little nameless kindneses, which though they consisted perhaps only in attending patiently to a tale of sorrow, told by a mourner of whom the world was tired or who was tired of the world, or listening with concern to the history of pain and confinement related by the valetudinarian, smiling at the fond enthusiasm of a mother when she described the wit or beauty of a darling child, or admiring the plans which an improver had laid down for the alteration of his grounds, were all so many testimonies of a good disposition, in the opinion

nion of those towards whom these little civilities were exerted, that Celestina had formerly had almost as many friends as acquaintance wherever she appeared. In the circle where she was now to move, more splendid even than that where Mrs. Willoughby's kindness had placed her, it was probable that under such introduction as that of Lady Horatia Howard, all the charms of her person, talents, and temper, would be seen to the utmost advantage.

Unaccustomed as Vavasour was to look far into consequences, he had discerned this as soon as he heard of the invitation Celestina had received; and he foresaw so many impediments to the pursuit of his wishes, as well from the severity and prudery which he had heard imputed to Lady Horatia, as from the interference of rivals, that he would very gladly have persuaded her against accepting it, had he had any pretence to offer for his objections: but having none, and not daring to invent any, he had confined himself to mutterings
against

against prudish old cats, and representing to Celestina, that she was going to confine herself as an humble companion, to bear all the caprices of a superannuated woman of quality. Celestina heard him at first with concern, from an idea that he had heard Lady Horatia misrepresented; but when, on his afterwards repeating this conversation, she found that he knew nothing of her character even from report, and only described her in so unpleasant a light from his wish to deter Celestina from finding an asylum in her house, anger conquered her concern, and even her complaisance, and she besought him in very strong terms never again to name Lady Horatia Howard to her, unless he could prevail upon himself to remember that she deserved, from her character rather than her rank, the respect of every man, and particularly of every gentleman.

Vavasour had desisted then from talking of her in this style; but he was not at all more reconciled to the abode Celestina had

had chosen; where, if he was admitted to see her at all, it would probably be only in the presence of those who would be little affected with his professions of that love which every day became a greater torment to him, and little dazzled by that fortune which he had to offer as the price of its return.

Celestina, however, to whom he had repeatedly said, that he would visit her, thought she could not too soon apprize Lady Horatia of her situation; and the first hour they were alone together, Lady Horatia expressed such a desire to know all that had passed in regard to Willoughby, since she saw her on her journey into Scotland, that Celestina, without hesitation, but not without great emotion, related it all, and put into her hands the letters received from him.

Lady Horatia read them, and attended with great interest to what Celestina related of the sudden appearance of Montague Thorold, and the avowed pretensions of Vava-
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four; and after deliberating some time, she smiled, yet not with a smile of pleasure, and said—"It appears, my love, as if you were only come to tantalize me for a moment with your company; for beset as you are by these young men, I see I shall never be able to keep you long."

"Ah! Madam!"—replied Celestina—"neither Mr. Vavasour nor Mr. Thorold can excite a wish in me to quit your protection, while it is convenient to you to afford it to me; and for my first, my most beloved friend! my——what shall I call him?——he talks not of returning to England: and if he does"——

"And if he does return"—interrupted Lady Horatia—"you must, and rightly formed as your heart is, you do, I am sure understand, that while the faintest mist of doubt hangs over you, you ought never to meet him, unless indeed one of you were married."

"Allow me to ask, Madam,"—said Celestina in a tremulous voice—"allow me to
ask

ask your Ladyship, who were so well acquainted with Mrs. Willoughby, whether from any recollection of remarks made in her life time, you have any persuasion as to the foundation of those doubt."

"You might have seen," replied Lady Horatia, "from the purport of a letter I wrote to you while you were in Scotland, that I had even then heard rumours of the cause of your separation from Willoughby, which Lady Castlenorth had very industriously set forth. I judged, from what I then heard, that if it was not true, her art would be so effectually exerted that you would never discover the deception; and that you must be rendered unhappy. It was therefore I advised you to detach yourself as much as you could from what is childishly called a first love. I thought, that what Mr. Willoughby was then said to be on the point of completing—his marriage with Miss Fitz-Hayman—was the very best thing he could do, both for his own sake and your's: for if it should be

found, you are related, the very idea is attended with too much horror to be dwelt upon; and even if it is a fabrication of Lady Castlenorth's, unless it can be clearly proved to be so, your whole life might be embittered by it; besides, my dear Celestina, how could Mr. Willoughby, circumstanced as I understand he is in regard to money matters, how could he afford to marry you?"

Celestina sighed deeply from the recollection of the arrangements as to all those affairs which Willoughby had so fondly made, and to which she had so fondly listened; then recovering herself, she repeated her question, which she thought Lady Horatia had evaded—"But has your Ladyship any recollection of circumstances in Mrs. Willoughby's conduct or life, that give you reason to believe this unhappy story may *not* be the fabrication of Lady Castlenorth?"

"Not from my own knowledge," replied she, "for I was in Italy with General Howard,

Howard, who was then in an ill state of health, at the time Mr. Willoughby's father died, and for two years afterwards. When I returned to England, I was absorbed in domestic uneasiness, and heard, without attending much to them, those gossiping stories which fly about for a week or a month till some newer scandal causes them to be forgotten. Yet I do recollect, I own, hearing some hints of Mrs. Willoughby's partiality for Mr. Everard, and that they were supposed to be privately married: but I accounted for it, when I attended to it at all, by recollecting that Mrs. Willoughby was, at the time of her husband's death, a young and beautiful woman, with a good fortune, and an admirable understanding; advantages, which, while they created envy and malignity in the minds of an hundred people who possessed nothing of all that, among her own sex; produced as many pretenders to her favour among the other; every one of whom, though some were men of rank, and

all of course eminent enough in their own eyes, were dismissed by her on their first application with a polite but positive refusal. These men were piqued, and these women were spiteful; and they together found out a reason for the unheard-of refusal of a young and admired widow, by supposing her attached to her son's tutor; not one of them, from the information of their own hearts, being able to conceive it possible that she made this sacrifice to maternal tenderness, and refused her hand to a second husband, because she would suffer nothing to interrupt the attention she owed to the children of the first."

"You do not then believe," said Celestina eagerly—"you do not then believe, my dear Madam, that there is any truth in this odious story?"

"Pardon me," answered Lady Horatia; "I did not say so."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Celestina, "is it possible you can believe it."

"My

“ My dear young friend,” said she, calmly, “ I have lived so long in the world, that though I do not hastily, and on slight grounds, believe such a report, yet I should not *wonder* were it in the event to be verified.”

Celestina, who had always in her own heart opposed the idea of her being the daughter of Mrs. Willoughby, though she felt and submitted to the necessity of seeing Willoughby no more while one doubt remained unsatisfied, now changed colour, affected as well by the manner of Lady Horatia as by what she said. She had not, however, courage to press her farther, but spoke of the visit intended her by Mr. Vavasour—“ I wish it were possible,” said she, “ to convince him at once that I shall never listen to the proposal with which he is pleased to honour me. As Willoughby’s friend,” added she, and sighed, “ I shall be always glad to see him; but, in any other light, never——”

“ I think you wrong, however,” replied Lady Horatia, “ in wishing so hastily to dismiss him. He is a man of family, of fortune, and, as you allow, not disagreeable in his person; and for his morals, they are not worse, I suppose, than those of other young men; he is allowed, I think, to be generous, good tempered, and not to want sense. If every idea of Willoughby is at an end, why not relieve yourself and him from a state of uneasy retrospection, by receiving the addresses of one whom he cannot disapprove ?”

“ Are you in earnest, Lady Horatia ?” cried Celestina.

“ Certainly I am,” replied she: “ at least, I venture very seriously to advise you not to dismiss Vavasour so hastily, but receive him as an acquaintance till you are sure you disapprove of him as a lover.”

“ Dear Madam !” resumed Celestina, “ were I capable of giving away my hand so lightly, is Mr. Vavasour a man who you think could make me happy ?”

“ Nay,”

“Nay,” replied Lady Horatia, “if there is any body whom you prefer, that is another point: I only say, that if you feel yourself perfectly disengaged, I cannot think Vavasour ought to be dismissed hastily. Perhaps half the young women in London would think a more desirable match could not offer.”

This conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who announced the arrival of the person who was the subject of it; and Vavasour immediately entered the room.

He condescended to pay to Lady Horatia more respect than he generally shewed to those who were indifferent to him. Hers was, however, that sort of company in which he by no means found himself at ease; and his eagerness to entertain Celestina alone, once or twice broke through the restraint which he imposed upon himself.

Lady Horatia, who was candid and liberal, saw in him only an unformed and un-

steady young man, whose morals and manners required nothing but time and good company to render estimable. She saw the prejudice Celestina seemed to entertain towards him, as a mere prejudice; and on his rising to depart, gave him a general invitation to her house.

Celestina, who knew the refinement of her mind, and the delicacy of her taste, was amazed at her seeming to approve of him; and when he was gone, ventured to say—
“What does your Ladyship think of Mr. Vavasour?”

“Why, really, very well,” replied she.
“He is very young, and quite unformed; but with those giddy manners, and that unpolished conversation, there is no want of understanding.”

Celestina again sighed. “No,” answered she, “no want of understanding, certainly; for Willoughby was not likely to select him for his friend had that been wanting: but yet they were so unlike—so very unlike—that I have often wondered at their
their



their long and intimate friendship. Vavasour is so headlong, so impetuous, so self-willed, and sometimes so boisterous; while Willoughby, with more imagination, more genius, more strength of understanding, is so calm, so reasonable, so attentive to every body——”

She was too much affected to proceed in the catalogue of his virtues, a subject on which she had hardly ever touched before; but stopped, from the emotion she felt; and Lady Horatia, who saw and pitied the source of that emotion, changed the conversation.

Vavasour, flattered by the reception he had met with from the present protectress of Celestina, and more in love than ever in proportion as she was in his opinion infinitely handsomer now than ever, was now very frequent in his visits; while Celestina's whole mind was occupied by the necessity she was under of writing to Willoughby, and the difficulty she was under how to answer with propriety such a letter.

as that she had received from him. At length, with many efforts, and more tears, the letter was written and approved of by Lady Horatia; and Celestina endeavoured, in compliance with the wishes of her friend, and with more earnestness than success, to dismiss from her mind some of its painful sensations, and to enter, if not with avidity, at least with cheerfulness, into that style of fashionable life, which, though she could not always enjoy, she never failed to adorn.

CHAPTER VIII.

VAVASOUR had been with her every day since her arrival in town, which was almost a week, and Montague Thorold had never appeared. While Celestina at once wondered at his absence, and rejoiced at it (though perhaps her sensations were mingled with a slight degree of mortification), for while she disdained every species of coquetry, she yet felt humiliated by the sudden cessation of that attachment which he had taken such pains to convince her, could not be destroyed even by despair.

Impatience, however, to hear of Willoughby, was still predominant in her mind: and for this purpose she wished to see Lady Molyneux. No acquaintance subsisted between her and Lady Horatia; and therefore she determined to write and beg

beg leave to wait on her old friend. This she executed in a note to the following purport :

“ Miss de Mornay being in town for a short time, solicits permission to wait on Lady Molyneux at any time when she may be disengaged.”

This note was delivered to Lady Molyneux in company. She read it, and as if she had forgotten totally the claim Celestina had upon her, from their having been brought up together, and from her mother's fondness for her, she asked carelessly whether the messenger waited for an answer; the servant replied that he did. Lady Molyneux had formed an idea that Celestina, of whom she had not thought for many months, was now wandering about the world in a dependant and inferior situation, and might perhaps expect an invitation to stay with her, which she had no inclination to give; she therefore, in a cold and careless

less way bade the footman tell the person who brought the message, that being then engaged with company she could not write an answer, but would take an opportunity of letting Miss de Mornay know when she should be at home. She then entered again into conversation with her guests; and it was not till the next day that she remembered having heard from Celestina at all; when seeing the note upon her table as she was going to dress for the opera, she gave it to her maid, and bade her put her in mind to send an answer to it, and fix the first morning she should be disengaged: but incessantly engaged, she afterwards never once thought of it.

Celestina in the mean time received the verbal answer to her note with more concern than surprise. She had not expected much kindness from Matilda, who, during so many months had never once written to, or enquired after her; but she could not without internal anguish reflect that it was the daughter of her more than mother, the friend of her orphan youth, and the sister
of

of Willoughby, who was thus insensible of all those feelings which swelled her heart when the scenes of that orphan youth, and the pleasures of that infantine friendship, were remembered.

Amid these painful reflections, however, there was one that gave her some degree of consolation. She thought that Lady Molyneux could not, either from any knowledge of her own, or from the reports spread by Lady Castlenorth, believe that any relationship by blood subsisted between them; for she supposed it to be impossible for her, in that case, to treat with so much cold neglect, a person whom she knew to be her sister. On this, therefore, she dwelt, as a circumstance favourable to the notion she most wished to entertain; and as time passed on without her hearing from Lady Molyneux, her eagerness to enquire after her, subsided into a strong belief that she knew nothing.

Vavasour assiduously attended every day at the house of Lady Horatia during this interval,

interval, and contrived to obtain for himself some degree of interest in her favour. The openness and candour of his temper, was with her an apology for half his faults; while his youth and natural vivacity obtained his pardon for the rest. His fortune was splendid, and his family ancient and respectable; while his person was such as could hardly fail to please; and his manners, careless and wild as they were, appeared to advantage in the eyes of Lady Horatia; who had been disgusted by the coldness and apathy, either real or affected; of many of those young men of fashion who frequented her house.

On Celestina, however, the frequent opportunities she had of observing Vavasour, had a very opposite effect. In *her* mind a standard of perfection had been early formed, and every man she now saw was pleasing or otherwise as they resembled or differed from Willoughby. She continued therefore to treat Vavasour with increasing coldness; and saw with concern that Lady
Horatia

Horatia was growing solicitous for his success.

Willoughby, in the mean time, continued to wander about Europe without any fixed plan, and merely flying from himself. Still anxious to gather information on the subject which had destroyed all the happiness of his life, and having little hopes of obtaining any but by means of Lady Castlenorth, he often conquered his reluctance, and visited his uncle at a villa he now inhabited near Naples; where he was always received with pleasure, and where, save only on the point which alone interested him, Lady Castlenorth seemed to descend from her natural character, to endeavour, by every means in her power, to gratify and oblige him: and her lord, who really loved his nephew as much as his imbecility of mind allowed him to love any body, and who saw in him and in his alliance with his daughter, the only chance of perpetuating a family which was the great object of his pride, became hourly more eager
to

to see him, and more gratified by his company.

It has been observed, that there are two reasons which equally operate in determining some people to marry—love and hatred; and something resembling both these sentiments agitated the heart of Miss Fitz-Hayman. Of an involuntary preference to her cousin, she had been sensible from the first moment she saw him; and his indifference, his preference of Celestina, and even his positively declining the honour of her hand, had mortified without curing her of her partiality; though resentment and disdain were mingled with the inclination she could not conquer, and which neither his absence nor his coldness had prevented from gaining on her heart. When she saw him again, new force was given to this passion: he was less handsome, less animated; but more interesting, and more pleasing; while his melancholy and dejection, though created by another object, gave him so many charms in the opinion of
of

of Miss Fitz-Hayman, that her pride yielded to them; and as it was now very certain that he had no attachment but to Celestina, whom, since she fully believed their relationship, she knew he never could marry, she doubted not of being able to inspire him with an affection for her, and, in returning to England his wife, of fulfilling at once her parents wishes and her own.

Lady Castlenorth, whose love of intrigue time had by no means diminished, and whose arrogance had been deeply wounded by the failure of her original plan, which she fancied Willoughby would with so much eagerness have embraced, was now doubly anxious to avail herself of the advantage she had gained by having prevented the intended union of Willoughby and Celestina. Pique and resentment operated upon her mind even with more force than attachment and regard would have on another. Besides, in the marriage of her daughter with any man of superior rank and

and independent fortune, she found great probability that her influence would be lessened, and her government disclaimed; but in uniting her daughter with Willoughby, whose fortune was in disorder, and whose temper was remarkably easy, she foresaw the continuation of her power, and that she should neither see her daughter take place of her, or escape from her influence.

Whatever was the wish of her friends, the assiduous Mrs. Calder officiously adopted; and when she found how much Lord Castlenorth had set his heart on concluding the marriage between his daughter and her nephew, she applied all her rhetoric to prove its advantages, and all her art to secure its success.

Willoughby was unconscious of the plans that were thus forming in the family of his uncle, and did not think it possible that their pride would allow them to solicit again an alliance which he had once declined: he therefore went to them without any apprehension that he was encouraging expectations

pectations he never meant to fulfil, and had indeed no other design than to lay in wait for traces of that involved mystery, which he still thought had been created by the intrigues and machinations of Lady Castlenorth.

In art, however, she was so much his superior, that the very means he adopted to obtain satisfaction, were, in her hands, a means of bewildering more deeply. She now affected the most perfect candour; and whenever she saw him touching with a tender hand on the subject, she appeared to feel for his uneasiness, and ready to give him every satisfaction in her power.

Willing to avail himself of this apparent disposition in his favour, he one day, when he was sitting alone with Lady Castlenorth, asked her, whether she had now no traces of Hannah Biscoe, the servant who alone seemed possessed of the circumstances into which he most wished to enquire. Lady Castlenorth answered with great apparent ingenuousness, that she did not exactly know,

know, as she had no connection at all with her, but that if he wished to make any enquiry, her woman should write out the directions to her relations, which she did not herself recollect.

Willoughby eagerly seized on this offer, and begged that these directions might be immediately written out for him. Lady Castlenorth instantly called her woman, and questioned her as to her recollection of the abode of the relations of this Hannah Biscoe; the woman named what she knew; her lady directed her to put it down, and Willoughby left the house, flattering himself that he had at length obtained a clue which might lead him to escape from the labyrinth of error and mistake wherein he had so severely suffered.

It was, however, by no means Lady Castlenorth's plan to suffer Willoughby to return to England in search of this woman, whose direction she seemed so willing to give him; and as from the eagerness and agitation he expressed on receiving this
paper,

paper, it appeared but too likely that he meditated going himself, in order to preclude the possibility of his views being again frustrated, she found that all her art would be necessary to prevent his escaping her.

Fortunately for her views, Lord Castle-north was seized a few hours afterwards with one of those illnesses, which had so often reduced him to the brink of the grave; and the presence of his nephew, which he so earnestly desired, the generous and feeling heart of Willoughby could not deny; while he endured the cruellest restraint in staying, and thought every hour an age till he could go himself to England, and renew his hitherto hopeless research after the real situation of Celestina.

Thus passed, however, a month after the arrival of Celestina in London; and then the arrival of an English gentleman at Naples brought him her letter, written in answer to that she received at York. Nothing could equal the impatience with which he had expected this letter, but the pain he
felt

felt at reading it. He learned by it that she was returning to London, where he fancied so many objects would combine to soften her concern for their separation; and he fancied the letter expressed too much calmness, and that she submitted to the separation which he had himself indicated as too likely to be inevitable, without feeling half that regret and anguish which he expected she would have described. The reluctance she expressed to be left to the protection of Vavasour, made him believe his presence interfered with her preference to some other person—a preference, of which the very suspicion threw him into agonies at the very moment his reason told him that he ought not to think of her for himself. Jealousy now added to the pangs of disappointed love, and the letter which Celestina had endeavoured to word so as to calm and soothe him, and to teach him to submit to that necessity of which he allowed the force, seemed to him to breathe only indifference, and to prove that
she

she saw him, without regret, relinquish his claim to those affections, which were already in possession of another.

All his sufferings were confirmed and encreased, when a day or two afterwards he had an opportunity of conversing with Mr. Jarvis, the gentleman who brought the letter, and who was hastening to Rome. He had been often in company with Celestina at parties where she attended Lady Horatia Howard; and believing, as all the world now did; that Willoughby was certainly to be married to Miss Fitz-Hayman; and that the marriage of Celestina would be a subject of satisfaction to him, he related without hesitation the reports he had heard of her being soon to give her hand to Mr. Vavasour.

To the amazement Willoughby expressed at the first intention of such a match, Jarvis, who entirely mistook its cause, said—
“Yes, it is wonderful, to be sure, considering all we know of Vavasour, that he should seriously intend to marry.”

So

So acute was the pain which the intelligence Willoughby had just received gave him, that he could make no answer to this; and Jarvis fancying him out of spirits for some reason or other which he never thought of enquiring after, soon after left him to meditate on what he had heard.

There was "room for meditation even to madness," when he recollected a thousand circumstances that had till now appeared of no moment: he was convinced that Vavasour had long admired Celestina; he had himself resigned her, or at least intimated that he dared not think of her; and the person, the fortune, the impetuous ardour of Vavasour, which his agitated mind represented as irresistible, now all crowded on his recollection, and he doubted not but that before he could reach England, Celestina would have given herself away.

Yet with the horrid mystery unremoved, on what pretence could he wish or even think of impeding a marriage with a man of whom his regard was evinced by his long

friendship, and who had so affluent a fortune. As a lover, he could himself no longer interfere; as her relation, he could not bear to consider himself; and were he only such, an alliance with Vavasour could not be objected to on any reasonable grounds.

The longer he reflected, therefore, on what he had heard, the more unable he became to support his reflections; and they concluded in a resolution to set out immediately for England; a determination which he communicated to his uncle the same day, who was affected by it even to tears.

Lady Castlenorth had, in conversation with Mr. Jarvis, heard the report of Celestina's intended marriage, and knew immediately how to account for the extreme uneasiness Willoughby betrayed, and his sudden resolution to depart for England. When Jarvis, who proceeded immediately on his journey, was gone, she found an opportunity a few hours afterwards to speak to Willoughby on English news, and the change

change of his countenance confirmed her conjectures. This was an occasion not to be lost; she ventured, what she usually avoided, to name Celestina, and to express her satisfaction that she was likely to be so well married. "After all the conversation there has been about this young person," said she, affecting to have a great deal of feeling for her, "I am very glad that the poor girl will be so well established. A man of Vavasour's independent fortune can well afford to please himself; and I doubt not but that you and Lady Molyneux must on every account rejoice at her change of name, and that nothing more will be said of her origin." Though Lady Castlenorth affected to speak with sentiment, and to soften her voice, her piercing and enquiring eyes were demanding from the countenance of Willoughby that explanation which she knew it would give of his real sentiments; and she saw the blood forsake his cheeks, his lips turn white and tremble, and a mingled expression of doubt,

fear, anger, and disdain, marked on his features. "If I were certain, Madam," said he, "that all the odious reports, on which *you*, who first promulgated them, have invariably refused to satisfy me as you might do—if I were sure they were all true——"

"If!" interrupted Lady Castlenorth: "can you then doubt their truth? Will you compel me to make, by adducing those proofs, a matter public which you ought on every account to wish might be buried in eternal oblivion?"

"Will I compel you, Madam! Yes surely I will if the means are in my power. 'Tis for this only I have been so much with you; not to compel you, indeed, but in the hope of prevailing upon you, if you really possess the evidence you have often meditated, to give it me all without reserve."

"Well," cried Lady Castlenorth, "I have now given you a direction to the only person who is in possession of this evidence. You might have procured it as long since as when I interfered to save you from the hor-

rors

rors of a marriage which must have rendered you and the object of your unhappily placed affection miserable for ever: but then you flew from me, and resented my friendship as if it had been an injury. Since that time it is not my fault if you have been unable to find this person, whom I have never secreted, and of whom I know little or nothing. Satisfied in having saved you from an abyss of guilt and misery, I trusted to time and your own principles to convince you of the injustice your suspicions did me. You have searched for proofs in those places where your mother is said to have been with her young charge: tell me, have you ever found any reason to believe the fact I told you of to be of my invention—to have been totally unfounded?"

Willoughby was conscious he had not; yet at the same moment he discovered that Lady Castlenorth had watched him, and knew of the journeys he had made to Hieres and to other places. Vexed and angry, not knowing what to think, or whether he

was imposed on by her superior cunning, or was needlessly tormenting himself in pushing the enquiry farther, he could not command the various uneasy sensations with which he was agitated; and therefore abruptly leaving the room, he hastened to his lodgings, and gave directions for his immediate departure for England.

He was concerned, however, for his uncle, and returned in the evening to take leave of him: he found him sitting with Mrs. Calder, who was reading to him a sort of *catalogue raisonnee* of the various ills to which the human body is subject; and as they passed in melancholy review before him, he stopped her to consult her on his own symptoms, and to enquire of her whether she did not think such and such complaints were about to add to his bodily infirmities. Mrs. Calder, who was always obliged to every body who fancied her skill enabled her to answer such questions, was delighted with the opportunity this afforded her of exhibiting her knowledge to
Willoughby,

Willoughby, from whom she could never procure the smallest voluntary attention; and the conversation became so irksome, that having waited near an hour, and seeing it not likely to end, Willoughby at length started up, and approached to take his uncle's hand, when Miss Fitz-Hayman, in all the langour of unhappy love, swam into the room.

On her entrance, Willoughby sat down again, as being unwilling to have her suppose he rudely fled from her approach. She put on an air of affected humility, and looked as if she thanked him for even this slight mark of attention. She gave a loud and deep sigh, prolonged as much as possible; her eyes, robbed of their fire, were turned mournfully upon him—"You are going from us, Mr. Willoughby?" said she, in a subdued and faint voice.

He replied, that business, which could not longer be delayed, made his return to England necessary.

Another deep sigh was all the lady's answer to this information : but Lord Castlenorth cried—" I am sorry to hear you say so, George—very sorry. I did hope that we might have all returned together as soon as my complaints subsided a little. As to business, you ought to remember that all your money matters might be easily settled if you pleased."

" I thank you, Sir," replied Willoughby, who saw whither the discourse would tend ; " but those matters are the least of my concern."

" Stay, however, one day," said Lord Castlenorth, " that you may execute some business for me. Surely, nephew, you will oblige me so far."

Though every hour's delay was death to him, he at length agreed, on his uncle's repeated entreaties, to stay four-and-twenty hours longer at Naples ; and then leaving the room, he was followed by the officious Mrs. Calder, who desiring leave to say half
a dozen

a dozen words to him alone, he suffered her to shew him into another room.

She put on a most rueful countenance; stroked her handkerchief, plaited her ruffles, and uttering an "oh dear!" between a sigh and a groan, she continued thus—"My dear good Sir! I wish to have a little conversation relative to your situation in this dear worthy family, for every member of which my poor heart bleeds."

"And yet, Madam," interrupted Willoughby, impatiently, "there is, perhaps, hardly a family among your acquaintance who are, in the opinion of the world, so little objects of compassion."

"The world!" exclaimed the lady: "Lord bless me, what signifies the opinion of the world. The world cannot see as I do into all their feelings. There's your most excellent uncle, as worthy a man as ever existed, sinking, poor good dear man! under five complaints, all incurable; and denied, alas! the only satisfaction this world has to give him—seeing his darling

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daughter.

daughter settled to his wishes, which would smooth his path to heaven, and leave him nothing but bodily pain—which is severe enough—nothing but bodily pain, as I observed, to contend with. Oh! Sir, what heart-felt satisfaction it must be to you! what comfortable reflection for a good heart, such as inhabits your breast, no doubt—I say, what delight it would be to you, to hold forth the amiable hand that should—

‘ Rock the cradle of reposing age,’

and sooth the latter days of so excellent and worthy an uncle.”

The whine, and the hypocritical grimace with which this speech was delivered, would have conquered the gravity of Willoughby at any other time: but he now felt his disgust irritated by impatience, amounting almost to rage; he repressed his feelings, however, with difficulty, unwilling by opposition to lengthen the conversation, which Mrs. Calder suffered not to languish, but thus went on—“ Ah dear! what a melancholy

lancholy reflection, as I observed, it is, to consider, that, poor good man, this is not likely to happen; and instead of it, this darling daughter, this fine young woman, heiress to such a noble fortune, so beautiful, so accomplished, so elegant—undeniably the first match in England in point of rank, and beauty, and fortune—so lovely in person, so amiable in mind, so elevated in understanding—far, alas! from being happy, sees her youth pass away in a hopeless passion, which from her infancy she has been taught to cherish, and which now her reason, aided by her affronted pride, tries in vain to repress. Oh! Mr. Willoughby! Mr. Willoughby! the happiness that you refuse, by how many would be courted! The heart that you disdain to accept, by how many would be adored! Dear creature! when I see how thin she is grown, and know the cause of it so well!—when I hear her sigh, and know how injurious it is to her dear delicate constitution, I really Sir—you will forgive my zeal—have looked
upon

upon you with amazement, and have asked myself whether you have eyes—whether you have a heart——”

“To what, Madam,” interrupted Willoughby, who could no longer endure her harangue patiently—“to what does all this tend?”

“Tend, dear Sir!” replied Mrs. Calder; “why certainly to open your eyes, if possible, to a sense of the happiness you are throwing away; to prevail on you to answer the expectations of all your friends, to consult your own interest, and to become all you ought to be.”

“You mean well, I conclude, Madam,” answered Willoughby, “by all this; but you mistake greatly, when you suppose, that the alliance to which you allude would contribute to the happiness of any of the parties for whom you are interested. I have no heart to offer Miss Fitz-Hayman; and if the partiality which you represent exists any where but in your own imagination, it would be ungenerous to encourage
rage

rage, and unworthy to avail myself of it, feeling as I do that I never can answer it, as I am very willing to allow the young lady's merits deserve; excuse me, therefore, if I entreat of you never to consider me as being likely to be more closely united with the family of Lord Castlenorth than I at present am, and to declare to you, that by persisting in pressing it, my uncle will put it out of my power to testify for him that regard and affection which I really feel.

Willoughby then left the room; and Mrs. Calder, piqued and mortified at the little success of her rhetoric, went reluctantly to give an account to Lady Castlenorth, by whom she had been employed, of the ill success of her embassy.

CHAPTER II.

WILLOUGHBY, notwithstanding every effort and every art made use of to detain him, pursued his way to England; but at Paris, the fatigue he had undergone, and the anxiety which had so long weighed on his spirits, combined to throw him into one of those fevers, to which, from his infancy, he had been subject: and for three weeks he was in the most imminent danger. Amid the wild ravings of the delirium that perpetually occurred during the severest paroxysms of the complaint, he called incessantly on Celestina; and complaining that Lady Castlenorth had taken her from him, entreated of his servant, a man who had lived with him for some years, to send for her that he might see her before he died.

This,

This, in the simplicity of his heart, his faithful attendant would have done, having no idea that any thing could be of more consequence than the wishes of his dear master, for whose life he was so cruelly alarmed; but when he asked him whither he was to send, Willoughby put his hand on his heart, sighed deeply, and replied, either that he did not know, or that it would be of no effect; for that, indifferent what became of him, she had already refused to come to him, and was gone to Scotland with Vavasour.

When the violence of the disease subsided, he ceased to name her; and his servant, afraid of renewing his recollection, carefully avoided any hint of what he had dwelt upon during his delirious ravings. Slowly, and with two relapses, he recovered strength enough to proceed to Calais; but nine weeks had elapsed since the information he had received from Vavasour; and it was near three months after that time before he arrived in London.

His

His first enquiry was after Vavasour, who was, he found, in Staffordshire; and his heart was relieved by the intelligence, for he dreaded lest he should have met him in London, perhaps married to Celestina. His next was after his sister, whom he still loved, and in favour of whom he was willing to forget all the neglect he had experienced from her, as well as the causes of displeasure given him by her husband.

After Celestina he feared to ask by a direct message to herself, and he therefore sought somebody who could tell where she now was, of which he concluded he should have intelligence from Lady Molyneux.

Lady Molyneux attended his summons; and while he embraced her, with tears of fraternal fondness, from a thousand tender recollections that crowded on his heart, he saw her equally unmoved by their meeting and unconcerned at his illness, of which he still retained melancholy proofs in his altered countenance and reduced figure. He took an early opportunity of turning
the

the discourse on Celestina; and saw, with encreased amazement, that far from being interested in the enquiry which had occupied his whole thoughts so long, Matilda was perfectly indifferent about it, or if he moved her a moment from the stillness of fashionable apathy, she shrunk from the subject with something like disgust; seemed afraid of the trouble of investigation, and careless how it might terminate; wishing rather to hear nothing about it, than to hazard—not the tarnishing her mother's honour, for to that she seemed insensible, but the probability of being obliged to own for a sister, one whom she had hitherto considered as a dependant; and of seeing her brother, from a point of honour, undertake to provide for her as a relation. Avarice, the heterogeneous child of selfish vanity, was become a leading feature in the character of Matilda: she found so many uses for money in adorning and in indulging herself, that she loved nothing so well, except the adulation it procured

cured for her; and so much power has this odious passion to pervert the heart, that instead of feeling concern in contemplating the sunken features and palid cheek of her brother, she could not, nor indeed did she attempt to check, a half-formed idea of the pecuniary advantage she should receive from his death.

While such were her thoughts, Willoughby asked her when she had last seen Celestina?

"Oh! replied she, "I have seen her only once in a room, and that was by accident. I was never at home when she called; and I hate that old Lady Horatia Howard that she lives with, and so took no great pains to meet them when I returned her visit. I have seen her though in public five or six times lately, but the girl seemed to me so very much altered, and to give herself such intolerable airs, that I rather shunned than sought her."

"Airs!" cried Willoughby. "She must indeed be greatly changed if she deserves such

such censure: but tell me, Matilda—what kind of airs?”

“ Oh! the airs of a beauty,” answered she, “ which you first taught her to assume, and which she has made a tolerable progress in, since this old cat of fashion has taken it into her head to make such a fuss about her, and since she has been surrounded with such a set of senseless boys. There’s your friend Vavasour constantly one of her suit, and there was a notion of his being fool enough to marry her, but I fancy that was given out merely by her exorbitant vanity, for I dare say Vavasour knows better.”

The heart of Willoughby sunk within him; but he was unable to express what he felt; and Lady Molyneux went on—
“ However, I have heard since, I think, that the girl has been addressed by another young fellow—one of the Thorolds, I think—whom I have lately seen with her, which would be more suitable, and more likely to be a match.”

“ You

"You have seen her, then, often?" said Willoughby, in a faint and faltering voice.

"Yes, in public," replied his sister; "but I have had no conversation with her." Lady Molyneux then changed the conversation, and soon afterwards left her brother more unhappy than she had found him.

He was by no means able to see Celestina in his present state of wretched uncertainty: yet to know that by traversing two or three streets he could once more behold her, once more gaze on that lovely countenance, and hear that voice so soothing, so enchanting to his ears, was to him a state of tantalizing misery, from which he knew nothing could relieve him but detecting the falsehood of Lady Castlenorth's report; and this he could only hope to do by another journey into Yorkshire, in order to find that Hannah Biscoe to whom he now thought he had certainly obtained a direction, and this he proposed doing immediately.

Celestina,

Celestina, however, surrounded by crowds of admirers; Celestina, forgetting all the tenderness she once felt for him, and rendering all his researches fruitless, even if they proved to him that he might again plead for the renewal of that affection, was an idea that unceasingly tormented him; and so painfully did the intelligence affect him which Lady Molyneux had given, that the ferment of his spirits produced a return of his fever, in a slighter degree, but still so as to confine him to his room; where, in a few days, he received a visit from Vavasour.

Vavasour was totally unconscious of the species of distress which Willoughby suffered; and since he himself had resigned her, and agreed to complete his engagements with the family of Castlenorth, for so his conduct had been generally understood in England, had no notion that the addresses of another, and particularly of his friend, could be otherwise than pleasing to him. He began, therefore, without remarking the concern and coldness of Willoughby,

loughby, imputing it only to his visibly deranged health, to relate to him his own views in regard to Celestina, and to complain of her preference of Montague Thorold. "The devil take me," said he, "if there is in England or in Europe another woman for whom I would take a fifth part of the trouble which this bewitching girl has already given me. Curse me if I am not ashamed of myself when I think what a whining puppy she has made of me; ten times I have left her, and ten times have returned, to prove to her that she might use me like a dog."

"Miss de Mornay," said Willoughby, in a voice affected by the various sensations he felt—"Miss de Mornay must be greatly changed, Sir, if she is become capable of any improper levity towards any gentleman who professes regard for her: at the same time you will recollect, Mr. Vavasour, that she is mistress of herself, and at liberty to reject those whose offers may not be acceptable to her. From the experiments

ments which you have been pleased to make (though from our long friendship I should rather have expected you to have applied to me before you made them)—from the experiments you have been pleased to make, it seems clear that Miss De Mornay has no favourable intentions towards you, and I would advise you by all means to decline the pursuit.”

“ May I perish if I do ! ” replied Vavasour, with all his usual impetuosity. “ No, George, unless it can be made to appear that young Thorold—that little curatizing fellow—without a shilling, and with nothing but his impudence and scraps of plays to recommend him, has better pretensions than I have, curse me if I will give it up ! ”

This second intimation of Celestina’s encouraging the addresses of Montague Thorold, was another dagger in the sick heart of Willoughby. He dreaded an explanation, which, while it might serve perhaps to subdue all his fears as to Vavasour, might create others equally insupportable.

He

He could not, however, remain many minutes in the breathless agitation of such suspense, and therefore said—"I really don't know any thing about Thorold. I hardly recollect that there was such a man."

"What!" exclaimed Vavasour: "not know him? Not know that she went immediately from Alvestone to the house of that old priest his father."

"Yes," answered Willoughby, "that I certainly knew; for it was by my request that the elder Mr. Thorold became her guardian."

"Well, nothing was so natural, I suppose, as for his reverence to delegate the trust to his son; and as his deputy, I suppose it was, that he went with his ward to Scotland, and was her guardian all the time she was among the highlands and the islands."

"Impossible!" cried Willoughby. "He did not—could not have been there."

"He was, by heaven!" exclaimed Vavasour; "and when I met Celestina, with
your

your letter, at York, I found that young fellow attending on her and Mrs. Elphinstone: but *I* was authorised by yourself to wait on her; and I obliged *him* there to resign a post, which, when I think of his having so long filled, and apparently with her approbation, by all that's diabolical, I could tear his puritanical soul out!"

Nothing that Willoughby had ever felt, was equal to the anguish which pressed on his heart at this moment. The coldness he fancied he had found in Celestina's last letter, was now accounted for; and all the warmth of grateful praise, with which in her former letters she had spoken of Mr. Thorold, was imputed to her growing affection for his son. Lost as she might be, and probably was to him for ever before this intelligence, unless he could content himself with that share of sisterly affection which was all she ought to bestow, there was something so terrible to his imagination in her feeling a warm attachment to another, that he could not think of it with-

out horror, nor conceal from Vavasour the effect it had upon him. His mildness of manners forsook him; and speaking less like himself than like Vavasour, whose vehemence he seemed to adopt, he cried, in a voice that trembled with passion—"How dared he pretend to Celestina!"

"He not only dared then—" interrupted Vavasour—"but dares still; and has contrived to get Lady Horatia Howard to be of his party. He has fascinated the old woman with his piety and his poetry; and I see very plainly that the young one will throw herself away upon him, unless you prevent it."

"May I perish," cried he, "if I do *not*!" Yet at that moment the recollection too forcibly occurred to him, that he had no right to prevent it, unless by urging a claim as her relation, from which his soul recoiled. So painfully acute were his present sensations, that he was unable to breathe, and without attending longer to the exhortations of Vavasour, who eagerly pressed him
to

to interfere immediately, he abruptly left the room, and sent by his servant a message to Vavasour, saying, he found himself so ill, that he was gone to bed; but should be glad he would call again for an hour in the evening.

Instead, however, of attempting to procure that repose which his encreased fever required, he went to the trunk where Celestina's letters were deposited, and with trembling hands taking them out, he ran them over, even from the first she wrote to him after their separation, to the last which Mr. Jarvis had delivered to him at Naples.

His apprehensive jealousy so powerfully awakened, now taught him to fancy, that from the moment of Celestina's acquaintance with Montague Thorold, her letters had become gradually cooler, and that the last too plainly evinced her cheerful acquiescence to that reluctant and only conditional resignation, which *he* had with so much anguish of heart been compelled to

send her, while he explained the cruel circumstances that had torn him from her and from happiness.

The longer he dwelt on her letters, the more this idea was strengthened, and the more insupportable it became. His illness originally occasioned by anxiety, returned upon him; and though without delirium, his fever was nearly as high as when he was in so much danger at Paris.

He now determined to send to Lady Horatia Howard; and he attempted to write to her. But he could hardly command his pen, and found himself wholly unequal to the more difficult task of composing such a letter as could alone be proper. He threw away the paper in despair; and calling his servant, ordered him to find out immediately some means of becoming acquainted with the servants of Lady Horatia Howard, and procure intelligence of what visitors were most at the house, particularly if a Mr. Thorold of Devonshire was there often.

The

The man hastened to enter on a task by no means difficult to him. He contrived the same afternoon to introduce himself to one of the footmen of Lady Horatia at the porter-house he frequented, and learned that his mistress and her young friend, of whom he spoke as of an angel, were gone for a fortnight or three weeks on a visit into Oxfordshire; that Mr. Vavasour used to be a good deal at the house when first Lady Horatia came to town; that now he was much less frequently there; but that Mr. Thorold was there almost every day, and read to the ladies whole evenings; who, since these reading parties at home, went much less into public than they had done before.

This intelligence distracted Willoughby, by redoubling every apprehension he had felt. The man, however, was sent back for further information, and bade to ask if Mr. Thorold was of their party in their present journey, and if there was any talk among the servants of an in-

tended marriage between him and Miss De Mornay.

In answer to these queries, he had the mortification of hearing that Montague Thorold was to meet the ladies at Oxford; and that it was, in the family, generally understood that he was the accepted lover of Celestina, and highly approved by Lady Horatia.

It was now that the corrosive jealousy that had long tormented him had a decided object, and fixed with the most envenomed power on the heart of Willoughby. The impossibility of his interfering to prevent Celestina giving herself to another while he himself remained in such a situation as the present, and dared not even see her; the little probability he saw of removing the doubts that distracted him; and the apprehensions lest if they were for ever effectually withdrawn, Celestina would rejoice that they were so; the cruel idea of Montague Thorold's possessing that heart which he once knew to be all his own, and the preference

ference of that elegant mind of which he had with so much delight contemplated the improvement; were thoughts that incessantly pursued and tormented him: and he had no means of obtaining any information of the conduct of Celestina, or of her return to town, but by his servant, who was now employed whole days to gather from the domestics of Lady Horatia, intelligence, which, when obtained, served only to encrease his misery.

The anecdotes he gathered from his sister served too but to aggravate his distress: yet when he saw her (as he generally did once every day), from whatever point the conversation sat out, it always ended in questions about Celestina: and Lady Molyneux, who had insensibly familiarised her mind to the idea of her brother's dying a bachelor in consequence of his early disappointment, now saw with concern that his attachment to Celestina, though it prevented his marrying any other, was yet so rooted in his heart, that should he find, as she believed he

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would,

would, the imagined relationship a mere fiction, he would most undoubtedly return to her with more ardour than before they were parted : and notwithstanding the embarrassed state of his affairs, which every day became more serious, would marry her, and disappoint every view of fortune—encrease of fortune—which her avaricious ambition foresaw might otherwise accrue to her.

Actuated, therefore, by very different motives, she co-operated with Lady Castle-north in endeavouring to divide him from Celestina ; and while one was strengthening the barrier raised between them, the other was trying to convince Willoughby that he ought not to wish for it's removal.

The means of doing this were, she thought, to keep him at a distance from Celestina, and to pique his pride, by representing her as attached to another. The first point was for the present secured by his illness ; and she took care so artfully to insinuate the second, that aided as she was by
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the report of Vavasour, and by the continual repetitions of what he had seen on the journey from Scotland, that every hour the fatal impressi^on sunk deeper into his heart, and his reason, or his reliance on Celestina's affection, had not sufficient power to resist it.

Thus passed five or six days after his arrival in London. He endeavoured to shake off his illness; for by a journey into Yorkshire, which he could not till it was conquered undertake, he could alone hope to obtain any satisfaction as to the original cause of their separation. Yet even from thence he now no longer dared to look forward to happiness, which even while he was employed in attempting to regain it, seemed escaping from him for ever.

But that he might undertake something to relieve himself from the wretched state he was now in, he put himself into the care of a physician, and set about getting out of an illness he had hitherto neglected, or rather indulged. Though very languid, and

with a great deal of fever still about him; he went to Lady Molyneux's; and, in a day or two afterwards, as he found himself better from change of scene and of place, he accompanied her on some of her visits, and called in at a card-party, where she told him she must shew herself for a quarter of an hour. The rooms were full; and Lady Molyneux being, notwithstanding her declaration that she should stay so short a time, set down to a card-table, Willoughby sauntered into one of the apartments where the younger part of the company were seated at a commerce-table; where the first person that met his eyes was Celestina, elegantly dressed and more beautiful than ever, with myriads of charms playing round her face, and cheerfulness and pleasure dancing in her eyes; while on one side sat a young man whom Willoughby immediately recollected to be Montague Thorold; and, on the other, another gentleman, who, though he seemed to be more a stranger to her, was evidently charmed with

with her, and unable to keep his eyes from her face.

Fixed to the place where he stood unheeded, among some other idle people who were looking on, he remained gazing at her for several minutes. His legs trembled so, that it was with difficulty he supported himself, and his heart beat as if it would break. He debated with himself, whether he should speak to her, or retire unobserved; but while he yet argued the point, a smile and a whisper that passed between her and Montague Thorold, determined him to fly from the torments he felt, and which he found it almost impossible to endure another moment: he stepped hastily away to find his sister, and entreat her to go; but so deeply was he affected, that, weakened as he was by illness, he staggered, and might have fallen, had not the shame of betraying so much weakness, lent him resolution to reach a chair, where he sat a moment to recover breath and recollection.

Mortified

Mortified tenderness and disappointed love gave him, for an instant, a sensation resembling hatred. He fancied he could quit Celestina, never again to feel any interest in her fate; but, leaving her to the man she preferred, strengthen himself against his fatal, and till now invincible attachment, by contemplating the fatal barrier which he had so long been trying to destroy, and to believe that artifice rather than nature had placed between them. Of this cause of their separation, no part had in fact been removed; and he reproached himself for the absurdity, folly, and even vice of his present conduct. Having argued himself into what he thought a resolution to feel no longer for Celestina, he hurried to Lady Molyneux, and told her, that if her game was not nearly at an end, he must leave her, and go home in a chair, as he found himself unable to bear the heat of the room.

His sister answered, that she was only settling her winnings, and would attend him

him in a moment, if he would wait for her. He agreed to do so; and, going to the door that led out of that into the next room, he leaned against the side of it, turning his eyes as much as possible from the apartment where Celestina was.

Lost in the painful sensations inflicted by distracting jealousy and bitter regret, which he yet struggled to stifle, he distinguished not the objects: all, to him, uninteresting that moved before him. A crowd of young people, however, who had just risen from their table, were pressing into another room, where refreshments were distributed. He moved a little to make way for them, when he saw, close to him, and even borne against him by her companions, Celestina herself. Her face was at first turned from him; for she was speaking to Montague Thord, who was on the other side; but finding herself crowding against somebody, she turned to apologise for the rudeness she was guilty of, when the well known figure, the well known face of Willoughby, emaciated

ciated and pale as they were, instantly struck her. An involuntary and faint shriek testified the impression they made; and Willoughby, who caught the weak sound of her distressful voice, was at first, by an irresistible impulse, hurried to her assistance; but seeing the arm of Montague Thorold supporting her, and his countenance expressing all the interest he took in her emotion, he imputed that emotion to her consciousness of her attachment to her new favourite; and darting at her a look of impatient reproach, he forced himself through the crowd, and without looking back, sat down breathless and trembling by Lady Molyneux, who was that moment coming forward to meet him.

The agitation of poor Celestina could not be concealed, nor could she for a moment or two escape from the enquiring eyes of those who remarked it. As soon, however, as she could disengage herself from the throng, she sat down, hardly daring to enquire whether what she had seen was real or visionary.

visionary. She had returned from Oxfordshire, with Lady Horatia, only the evening before, and knew nothing of Willoughby's being in England; while, in addition to the amazement the sight of him occasioned, his apparent ill health impressed her with concern, and the displeasure with which he surveyed her, with terror.

Montague Thorold, who had seen Willoughby, and whose eyes were never a moment away from Celestina, knew at once the cause of her distress. He followed her, little less affected than she was herself, to a sofa where she had thrown herself, and asked her, in a faint and tremulous voice, if he should fetch her any thing? She answered—"If you please"—so low, that he scarce distinguished what she said: but stepping a few paces from her, he took a glass of lemonade from a servant, and brought it to her. She took it, and carried it to her lips, almost unconscious of what she did, while Montague Thorold leaned over the arm of the sofa on which she sat, and watched

watched the emotions of *her* countenance, with all the solicitude he felt strongly painted on his own.

At the same moment Willoughby appeared, leading Lady Molyneux through the room. The first objects that he saw as he approached the door, were Celestina and Montague Thorold : but having once seen them, he turned hastily from them ; and seeming to give all his attention to his sister, he disappeared.

Celestina's eyes followed him with a look of inexpressible amazement and concern. She seemed to be in a fearful dream ; and when she no longer saw him, her eyes were fixed on the door through which he had gone out. She heeded no longer what Montague Thorold said to her ; but sat, with a palpitating heart and oppressed breath, till Lady Horatia, after twice speaking to her, roused her from her half formed and confused reflections, by reminding her it was time to go.

She

She followed, in silence, where Lady Horatia led, and at the coach-door wished Montague Thorold good night; for the only distinct sensation she felt, was a wish for his absence: but Lady Horatia, who was immediately going home, desired him to return and sup with her; which, without knowing what he did, he consented to, though too conscious while he did it that Celestina had rather be without him; for, as he handed her into the coach, he felt her tremble so that she could hardly support herself, and he heard the deep sigh burst from her heart as if it would break.

Lady Horatia had not seen Willoughby, and had no idea of Celestina's sufferings. She talked therefore in her usual way of the people they had seen, and of some books that had been recommended to her; till observing that Celestina, who usually bore her part in the conversation, did not answer, she enquired if she was not well?

"Pretty well, I thank your Ladyship,"—replied Celestina—"but I am uncommonly
fatigued

fatigued to night, and have the head-ach.” This answer satisfied Lady Horatia, who continued to address herself to Montague Thorold, till they arrived in Park-street; where Celestina would immediately have gone to her own room, so unfit was she for conversation, and so unable to sustain it; but Lady Horatia ordering her woman to bring a remedy for the head-ach, of which Celestina had complained, and that had before been of service to her, she, rather than alarm her kind benefactress, sat down near the supper-table to wait for it.

But so great an effect had the violent, though short perturbation of her spirits, had on her countenance, that Lady Horatia immediately perceived it.—“The head-ach!”—cried she in surprise, and taking Celestina’s hand:—“my dear, you have surely something worse than a common head-ach.”——

“Pray, dearest Madam”—replied Celestina—“pardon me, if I am utterly unable to say what is the matter. To-morrow I shall

shall be better, and I know you will forgive me till then."

The manner in which she uttered these few words, as, trembling and faint, she advanced towards the door, alarmed and surprised Lady Horatia. She saw, however, by the countenance of Montague Thorold, that he could explain the cause of Celestina's uneasiness; she therefore suffered her to depart, and immediately made the enquiry of him.

He instantly informed her of what he had seen; and with no favourable description of the looks and manner of Willoughby, which had indeed appeared to him to be extremely cruel and insulting towards Celestina. Lady Horatia, with whom Willoughby was no favourite, and who extremely disliked his sister Lady Molyneux, saw his conduct in the same point of view as Thorold represented it; and, after some conversation on the subject, said, that though she was much concerned for the shock Celestina had received, yet that upon
the

the whole it might perhaps be better for her that this circumstance had happened. "For now," said she, "I think she will, possessing, as she does, so much proper pride, be convinced, that even if the story coming from Lady Castlenorth has no foundation, as I myself suppose it has, that still she ought not to indulge her early prejudice in favour of a man, who, whatever *he* may have pretended or *she* may have believed, never intended to act honourably by her, and now not only deserts but insults her."

Thorold heartily assented to this opinion, and sat down to supper with a heart somewhat relieved from the extreme uneasiness which the emotion of Celestina on the appearance of Willoughby had given him. Still, however, he could not eat, he could not converse; but as soon as he could disengage himself, he took leave of Lady Horatia, and full of anxiety, and trembling lest all the hopes he had of late so fondly cherished should be blasted, he returned to his lodgings.

CHAP.

CHAPTER X.

CELESTINA, in retiring to her own room, had hoped to recal her scattered and oppressed spirits, and clearly recollect all that had befallen her; but the angry, the disdainful look which that countenance wore where she had been accustomed to see only the smiles of approbation, or the tenderly anxious looks of love, was the image still more prevalent in her mind, joined to the painful idea of the ruined constitution of him whose life was ever dearer to her than her own.

The cruelty of his being in London, of his going into public without ever having seen or wrote to her, sunk deeply into her heart. "Ah! Willoughby," exclaimed she, "is it thus we meet again after such
a part-

a parting? Is this the end of all your assurances, that you would ever be my friend? that you would learn to consider me as your sister if we were indeed related? alas! is it thus then you throw me off entirely, and seem sorry to remember that you ever saw me?" A flood of tears followed this cruel reflection; but after weeping some time, her pride came to her relief: she remembered the haughty neglect with which Lady Molyneux had treated her, and doubted not but that her influence with Willoughby had prevailed on him to expel her for ever from that place in his regard which the very reasons on which he resigned her as his wife, ought to give her, as a defenceless and unhappy orphan, dependent on his family. She recollected now but too well the reserve and disdain, the look of mingled anger and scorn, which Willoughby's features spoke as she saw him the second time leading out his sister; and her mind dwelt on the expression of his eyes as they first met her's; when, though he must have
seen

seen how much she was surprised and affected by the sight of him, he flew from her without one consoling word, though it was evident she could hardly support herself.

“All is over, then,” cried she: “that tender friendship, which would have been the consolation of my life, is at an end. Every tie that from our infancy united us is broken, and I have now no reliance but on the kindness of those who are comparatively strangers. Ah! is it generous thus to discard me, without even trying to soften the blow: but go, cruel, capricious man, go, and enjoy, with your opulent heiress, all that affluence can give: go, and become callous and insensible to all those noble sentiments that once animated your bosom, which once rendered you so deservedly dear to me. They are gone. Willoughby, selfish, cruel, unfeeling, and insolent, is not the Willoughby to whom my heart was devoted. Why, therefore, should I be thus wretched about him? why let his
proud

proud, malignant sister triumph in knowing that I am mortified and unhappy? Let me try to drive his too-painful remembrance from me; or at least to remember him only as the son of my beloved benefactress."

At the mention of that revered name, however, all her newly-acquired resolution forsook her. The memory of her tender, her first friend, was so intimately connected with that of Willoughby himself, that her tears flowed for both; and against the unkindness of the latter neither her pride nor her reason could sustain her.

A sleepless night succeeded to this conflicting evening; and it was not till towards morning that Celestina determined to write to Willoughby, entreating him still to allow her that place in his friendship, which no fault of her's had, she thought, forfeited; and assuring him, that whatever might be her destiny, her regard for him was unchangeable, though she would never intrude upon him with it. Her tenderness conquered her resentment, and the idea of
what

what she owed to the son of her early friend, whatever might be his conduct towards her, came in aid of that long rooted tenderness, and produced the resolution which she meant to execute in the morning. Having thus determined, her mind gradually became more tranquil, and her spirits being quite exhausted, she sunk into slumber.

But the fainter though still painful ideas of the evening before pursued her; and after tormenting her with numberless wild terrors, she fancied that she saw Willoughby with the same menacing look he wore the preceding night, with a dagger in his hand, approaching and threatening her to plunge it into a heart, which was, he said, perfidious and ungrateful, and had been the means of driving him to guilt and despair.

From an image of such horror she wildly started; and awaking, found Lady Horatia Howard sitting by her bed-side, holding one of her hands, and gazing on her with great concern.

With the most soothing voice she spoke to Celestina, and endeavoured to quiet the excessive agitation of her spirits. Her reasonable and gentle arguments had their desired effect; and Celestina, ashamed of appearing insensible to the solicitude of such a friend, summoned all her resolution to her aid, and was able in about an hour to attend the breakfast-table with something like composure. Her cheeks, however, had still that crimson glow which the perturbed state of her mind had given them: her eyes were heavy with tears, which, in despite of all her efforts, continued to fill them, when the image of Willoughby, pale and thin, with anger flashing from his eyes, and contempt trembling on his lips, again arose in her imagination. Lady Horatia looked at her with more than her usual tender complacency; for it was when her fine open countenance expressed pensive sorrow, that she was, from her then particularly resembling the regretted brother of Lady Horatia, to her more than usually interesting.

Before

Before the breakfast-table was removed, Montague Thorold was introduced. He was extremely dejected; and hardly able to return the compliments of Lady Horatia, who was always glad to see him, and who had undoubtedly given him all her interest with Celestina, and more encouragement to pursue his suit than was perhaps strictly prudent; since Celestina, though she could not avoid him; though she never could prevail upon herself to behave to him with unkindness, and though his talents and conversation, and perhaps that sort of respectful idolatry by which few women can help being gratified, however they may wish to repress it, were, in some degree, pleasing to her, had yet repeatedly declared to Lady Horatia, and to Montague Thorold himself, that she felt not, and was persuaded she never should feel for him, that tender preference, without which she never would marry. This declaration they both imputed to that affection for Willoughby, which the uncertainty

tainty of her own situation continued to nourish. Persuaded as they both were, that Willoughby had promised to become the husband of Miss Fitz-Hayman, which every body but Celestina had long believed, Lady Horatia doubted not but that the merit and attachment of Montague Thorold, the similarity of their taste, Celestina's regard for his father, and the easy competence which with him she could possess, and which she often declared was the condition of life she would prefer, would, all together, induce her to reward his ardent affection with her hand, as soon as it became certain that Willoughby, either from interested motives, or from conviction of their too near relationship, absolutely and for ever relinquished all pretensions to it. She was, therefore, glad that the accidental meeting which had so much affected Celestina was likely to hasten this period ; and, far from seeing it in the unfavourable light Thorold himself did, she told him, as soon as Celestina left the
the

the room, that for him no circumstance could be more favourable.

Lady Horatia had long since transferred entirely to Montague Thorold those good wishes which she had at first expressed towards Vavasour. His great fortune, his handsome figure, and his apparent affection for Celestina, had for some time interested her for him; and she imputed his extravagant vivacity, and even his violent irregularities, to his youth and unchecked habits of gratification. Before her, Vavasour had at first so far restrained the intemperate sallies of his ungovernable temper, that she was for some time disposed to think well of his heart and his understanding: but soon finding, that this semblance of moderation availed him not, and that he gained nothing on the inflexible heart of Celestina, he became tired of it, and relapsed into such a wild way of talking, and of boasting of actions still wilder, that Lady Horatia was no longer able to excuse him; and though she still received him at her house with civility,

she entirely approved of the resolution Celestina had made, never to listen to him as a lover.

It was just at that period, that Montague Thorold, who on Celestina's first arrival in town had not availed himself of the permission he had obtained to see her, came to solicit of Lady Horatia that indulgence, and accounted for his absence by relating a long illness his father had just escaped; in which, as Mrs. Thorold was absent with one of her daughters, he had himself been his only and constant attendant. "You know," said he to Celestina, "how much I love my father, and how well he deserves that I should love him; and you will easily imagine, what must have been my anxiety, when, for so many nights and days, I saw him experience the most excruciating tortures, and knew his life to be in the most imminent danger. Even the reigning, the triumphant passion of my heart—my love, my adoration of Celestina, was suspended, in the pain and solicitude I suffered for my father."

His looks, which were greatly changed since Celestina saw him before, witnessed how severe this pain and solicitude had been; and Celestina not only forgave, but esteemed him the more for that neglect, which had at first given her a slight degree of mortification. From that time he had constantly visited at the house of Lady Horatia, and from his power of amusing her by reading and conversation, he was become so great a favourite, that he had no rival in her good opinion but Celestina herself. It was at her request he had met them at Oxford, and gone with them to Bath and Bristol. Celestina, who saw but too plainly that all this was but feeding a passion already fatal to the repose of a young man whom she highly esteemed, had in vain remonstrated with Lady Horatia on the subject; who answered, that *her* presence was a sufficient protection; and that as to his love, he would not indulge it the less for being refused the opportunity of speak-

ing of it. To this doctrine Celestina could not assent: but, in her situation, to dissent was of little effect; and all she could do to counteract the effects of this indiscreet indulgence of Lady Horatia towards Montague Thorold, was, to declare to him very solemnly, whenever he introduced the subject of his love, which was whenever they were alone, that though her esteem and regard for him were very great, she never could think of him otherwise than as her friend: and when he answered, that, content with that esteem and regard, he should be the happiest of mankind, to be permitted by time and tenderness to win her love, she very frankly assured him, that the sentiments which were once her's for Willoughby, though towards him they might be at an end, could never, she was well assured, be transferred to another.

Montague Thorold, however, young, sanguine, and violently in love, was not easily discouraged; while the favour of
Lady

Lady Horatia, the wishes of his father, and the complacency and kindness with which, notwithstanding her repeated declarations, Celestina treated him, all contributed to cherish a passion which insensibly absorbed his whole soul. Every action, every sentiment, every look of Celestina, at once increased and justified this excessive passion; and he lived now only to think of her when she was absent, or gaze on her with adoration when she was present. Whenever he knew she was to be at any public place (information which he was very assiduous and very successful in obtaining), thither he went also; and though, unless he was invited, he never introduced himself into the parties she was with, he contrived so to place himself as to be able to see her, and was content.

The extreme dejection with which he had on the last morning entered the house of Lady Horatia, all fled before her assurances that the meeting between Willoughby and Celestina, however she might for a little

time be affected by it, would prove of advantage to him. Elated more than ever by hope, he left Lady Horatia, having obtained leave to meet them at the opera, whither they were going that evening.

But with poor Celestina it was very different : hope had now wholly forsaken her, yet still she clung even to despair, when it gave her an excuse for dwelling on the beloved and regretted name of Willoughby.

She took out of her dressing-box a locket, in which his hair was interwoven with that of his mother and of his sister, and which she had been used, when a child, to wear round her neck. She looked at it a moment, and remembered a thousand circumstances that brought the tears again into her eyes. She kissed it—she put it to her heart—and that soft heart melting at the tender images this slight memorial presented to it, the resentment which her pride had made her feel the evening before, was forgotten ; while, unable to bear the thoughts of having seen the last of Willoughby, of
his

his having taken an accidental but eternal leave of her with anger and scorn, she determined instantly to execute her purpose formed the evening before, and with a trembling and uncertain hand, wrote as follows:

“ Do not think, dear Willoughby, that
“ the unfortunate Celestina means to in-
“ trude upon you with her complaints, or
“ to trouble you, after the present moment,
“ with even her name. But when those
“ recollections which she cannot all at
“ once subdue press upon her heart, she
“ finds it impossible—quite impossible—to
“ submit to take of you an eternal farewell,
“ without entreating, that though we ne-
“ ver meet again, we may part in peace
“ with each other.

“ I might indeed urge to you, Wil-
“ loughby, that, if the account you gave
“ me of our supposed relationship be re-
“ alized, it ought not to excite your anger,
“ but to give me a claim to your protec-
“ tion. If my heart did not, I know not
“ why,

“ why, revolt from the idea of being so
“ nearly your relation, I might on that
“ score claim your protection and your
“ pity ; I might be permitted surely to
“ love you as my brother, since, alas !
“ whether you permit it or no, I must still
“ love you—but with an affection so dis-
“ interested and pure, that, be my situation
“ in regard to you what it may, I feel no-
“ thing for which I ought to blush.

“ You look very ill, Willoughby. You
“ look unhappy : and on me you looked
“ unkindly. I do not ask to see you, since
“ my accidentally meeting you was evi-
“ dently painful to you ; but I ask to have
“ a few lines from you to tell me that you
“ are not ill, that you are not unhappy,
“ and that your once loved Celestina is
“ not become hateful to you. Believe me,
“ I shall rejoice in your happiness where-
“ ever found. Do not then refuse to assist
“ me in obtaining—not happiness, for that
“ is no where to be found for me—but in
“ obtaining that degree of content and re-
“ signation,

“ signation, which may enable me to go
“ through life without regretting the hour
“ that I ever received it. This, Willoughby,
“ is in your power; and you must be greatly
“ changed indeed if you refuse, when you
“ can so easily grant, the last request that
“ ever will be preferred to you, by the
“ unhappy, but ever grateful and affectionate

“ CELESTINA DE MORNAY.”

Park-street, Grosvenor-square,

March 23, 17—.

Though by no means satisfied with her letter when she had finished it, she despaired of pleasing herself better. She therefore sealed and sent it away by one of the footmen to the house of Lady Molyneux, as she knew no other address to Willoughby. The servant returned in about half an hour, and told her that Mr. Willoughby was not there; but that he had sent in the letter, and received a message that it should be taken care of and delivered to him.

She

She had flattered herself, that if not a kind, at least an immediate answer would put an end to that almost insupportable state of anxiety which she had been in ever since she saw him. If he wrote to her with kindness, it would, she thought, soothe and console her: if he treated her, by letter, with as much coolness and disdain as he did during their short interview, she hoped that resentment would support her; and that, though her pride might be wounded, her affection would torment her less.

She was now, however, to wait—perhaps a whole day—in anxiety; and, what was more dreadful, be compelled to sustain this anxiety under the appearance of calmness, if not of cheerfulness; for Lady Horatia, who had made an engagement with some of her friends to go to the opera, whither she seldom went herself, on purpose to gratify Celestina by hearing a new and celebrated performer, did not seem at all disposed to relish the proposal she had ventured to hint at breakfast, of being left out of the party
of

of the evening: and though she was generally very desirous that Celestina should in all such matters follow her own inclinations, yet there were times when she seemed to expect some sacrifices to be made to her.

Her grateful heart was extremely sensible of all the kindness of Lady Horatia; who, from having taken her into her protection quite a stranger, was now so attached to her, that her happiness seemed her first object. Having no very strong affection for her only surviving brother, who was a man immersed in politics, and without pretence to natural affection; and having been torn early in life from a man she loved, and married by her father to one towards whom she was indifferent; having since followed her three children, who alone had reconciled her to her lot, to their early graves; her heart had become insensible to what are commonly called friendships, and she had for some years rather sought to amuse than to connect herself. But the graces of Celestina's mind, the sweetness of her disposition,

tion, and the goodness of her heart, had so won upon her, that the apathy of wearied sensibility, which she had so long been in, gradually gave place to an affection almost as tender as she could have felt had she been her mother; and this affection, created by merit, was strengthened by the resemblance which continually struck her between Celestina and her younger brother, who lost his life in America, the loss which, among all her misfortunes, she most severely lamented.

Her encreasing tenderness for Celestina, made her often reflect with uneasiness on her situation, and very earnestly wish to see her married. She was very sensible that her own life was not a good one; for early calamity had shaken her constitution, and brought on, in the early autumn of her days, the infirmities of old age; and she knew, that after having taken her as her daughter, and accustomed her to share all the indulgencies which her own rank and income procured, it would be a very painful reverse of fortune, were she to leave her in the
narrow

narrow circumstances in which she found her. To save much out of her jointure, had never been her wish, and was hardly now in her power. Her own fortune, in default of children, returned to her brother; and all she had to dispose of, was about two thousand pounds. This she gave, by a will made in the fourth month of their being together, to Celestina; and with this, and what she before had, she thought that Celestina might, if married to Montague Thorold, enjoy through life that easy competence which was the utmost of her ambition. The embarrassed circumstances of Willoughby, which the good-natured world had always exaggerated, and which Lady Horatia had considered as irretrievable; his very expensive place at Alvestone, which she knew it required a large fortune to keep up; the doubtful birth of Celestina, whom she always fancied too nearly related to him; and some prejudice against him, merely because he was the brother of Lady Molyneux, whom she so very much disliked;

disliked; all combined to raise, in the mind of Lady Horatia, a desire to impede every step towards the re-union of Celestina and Willoughby, and to promote her alliance with Montague Thorold, near whose residence, wherever it was, she proposed to take a house in summer, and to have them frequently with her in winter, at her house in town.

Though she had not disclosed all her intentions, Celestina yet knew enough to be deeply sensible of the uncommon generosity of her friend; and the whole study of her life, was to shew that she was so. She made it a rule never to oppose the wishes of Lady Horatia, whenever they were clearly expressed; and therefore it was that she had often, contrary to her own judgment and to her own inclinations, suffered the assiduities of Montague Thorold; and seemed to the world to give him that encouragement, the ill effects of which she endeavoured to counteract, by ingenuously declaring to him the impossibility of her ever
making

making the return he expected to his affection.

Too certain that Lady Horatia would be disappointed if not displeased if she declined on this evening to go out, and not having courage to tell her the step she had taken in regard to writing to Willoughby, she was compelled to struggle with her uneasiness, and to attempt concealing if she could not conquer it: but every rap at the door which seemed to be that of a servant, made her tremble; and while sitting at work before dinner, she could not help going to the window several times, nor listening to every sound that she heard in the hall. Time wore away, and her impatience increased, and at length grew so evident, that Lady Horatia remarked it. "What is the matter, my dear!" enquired she: "do you expect any one?"

Celestina, conscious that she was betraying herself, and fearing lest she should be blamed for what she had done, of which she began already to repent as too humiliating, blushed

blushed at this question so deeply, that had not Lady Horatia been intent at that moment on her work, her suspicions must have been heightened. Celestina, however, not immediately answering, she repeated her question—"Do you expect any body?"—Twenty reasons might have been given for her seeming anxiety, and twenty people might have been named as likely to call; but not one of all these occurred to Celestina, who was little practised in dissimulation: she therefore answered faintly—"No:" and, in hopes of turning Lady Horatia's attention from her, and of hiding what she felt, she proposed finishing the perusal of a poem which Montague Thorold had begun to read the preceding morning.

"Do so"—said Lady Horatia.

Celestina took up the book and began; but had no idea of what she was about, and of course read so extremely ill, and so unlike her usual manner, that Lady Horatia, looking at her very earnestly, said—"Surely, Celestina—surely something is the matter!"

"No,

"No, indeed, Madam," replied she, "nothing, except perhaps some slight remains of nervous agitation, from the circumstances of last night."

"Try, my dear, to conquer that," replied Lady Horatia, "and think of regaining the composure you possessed before; which such a circumstance, fairly considered, ought not to destroy."

Celestina sighed; and to avoid the necessity of giving an answer, went on with the book before her. She had hardly, however, read ten lines, when a servant brought in a letter and gave it her. She turned paler than death as she took it, and the book fell from her hands.

Lady Horatia, whose attention was now fixed upon her, eagerly asked from whom was the letter. Celestina had by this time read it; for it was only a note from a young friend, for whose painting she had promised to give some pattern. She put it down: "It is only from Miss Clayton, Madam," said she, "about the patterns I am drawing for her."

"Dear

“ Dear child,” cried Lady Horatia, “ and is all this trembling and anxiety, this faltering and solicitude, about Miss Clayton’s patterns ? Celestina, I am afraid you are not ingenuous with me ! Surely, I deserve that you should be so ! ”

Celestina felt that this accusation of want of confidence, and the claim made to it, were equally just. The measure she had adopted, at the risque of displeasing her best friend, had produced nothing but some hours of anguish, and would end probably in the conviction, that Willoughby despised and contemned her : for it was now five o’clock, and it was very improbable that he should not, in all the hours that had intervened since she wrote, have been at his lodgings, or have had time to acknowledge the receipt of her letter. This mortifying reflection, and the consciousness that she ought to have consulted Lady Horatia, quite overwhelmed her. She was pale and silent a moment ; and then recovering her voice, with difficulty said—“ I believe

believe I have acted so foolishly, so improperly, that I hardly dare hope you will forgive me."

Lady Horatia expressing her uneasiness and surprise, Celestina, in a tremulous voice, told her what she had done. Pity rather than anger was created by the recital. "Certainly, my dear child," said Lady Horatia, "had you consulted me, I should have advised you against writing to Mr. Willoughby. Situated as you both are, no advances should have come from you. If he is convinced that you are so related to him as to make every thought of you, beyond such as that relationship authorises, guilty and odious, he should surely, on his coming to England, have sent to you if he was unwilling to see you, and have behaved with humanity and brotherly tenderness, though love were for ever out of the question: if he is not convinced of it, how will you account for his conduct, but by supposing, that, influenced by pecuniary motives or by caprice, he is desirous

firous of forgetting all his former affection for you, and yet has not that generous openness of character which would urge him to quit you handsomely."

To the truth of these remarks Celestina had nothing to object; but their justice cruelly depressed her, and her sick heart recoiled from the idea of being obliged to appear in public. Again she ventured very gently to insinuate a wish to be left at home that evening. "If you are really ill you shall,"—said Lady Horatia,—“but otherwise I hope you will go.”

“I am not really ill,” replied Celestina, “if your Ladyship means only bodily suffering: but my spirits, my mind—”

“For the maladies of those,” interrupted Lady Horatia, “there is no remedy more sure than change of scene, and variety of amusement; and believe me, dear Celestina—believe me—(and I have suffered much from the maladies of the mind)—they only grow by indulgence: if we would conquer, we must contend with and not encourage

encourage them.—You will suffer much less to-night, if you are in a circle of friends, who love and admire you, than in brooding at home over the defection of one, who, if he ever did, certainly does not now deserve you.—I beg, therefore, that you will go.”

Celestina, unaccustomed to dispute any wish of her friend, yielded, with as good a grace as she could, to her remonstrances; and with a heavy and aching heart, went to finish her dress.

The hour of going out arrived; and Celestina found Montague Thorold, and a Mr. Howard, a relation of Lady Horatia's, ready to attend them.—As there was no escape, she endeavoured to assume the semblance of tranquillity, and to talk with them on indifferent matters: but the idea that Willoughby had left London without seeing her; or, being still in it, disdained to answer her letter, and utterly refused to notice her; hung so heavy on her heart, that

she could with difficulty support herself; while the protracted state, in which she had been since the preceding evening, occasioned such a ferment in her blood, that her cheeks were of a feverish crimson; and the languid lustre of her fine eyes never appeared to greater advantage.—Deep sighs, which she tried in vain to suppress, stole from her heart; and Mr. Howard rallied her upon them, with that sort of commonplace wit, which is so usual, and so irksome, where there is real uneasiness to contend with: while Montague Thorold answered every sigh of hers, by one yet deeper of his own; and watched every turn of her countenance with trembling solicitude.—

Lady Horatia was to join another party at the opera; and Celestina was in hopes, that by obtaining a seat in one of the last rows in the box, she should be excused from the task of seeming to give any attention, either to the performance, or the people around her.—This, therefore, she
con-

contrived to do, and Montague Thorold placed himself by her.

Her thoughts were engrossed wholly by Willoughby—and by the cruelty of his refusing to answer her letter. She saw not the objects about her; she attended not to the humble and plaintive voice of Thorold, who now and then spoke to her; when Lady Horatia Howard turning to her, bade her remark, that into the opposite box had just entered Lady Castlenorth and her daughter.

Celestina instantly saw them, and as instantly concluded, that Willoughby's conduct towards her was owing to his being on the point of marriage with Miss Fitz-Hayman.—She had hardly felt her heart sink under this cruel idea, before Willoughby himself appeared; and Lady Castlenorth making room for him, he sat down between her and her daughter.

A look from the penetrating eyes of Lady Horatia Howard made Celestina turn away her head; but she then met the anxious

and enquiring eyes of Montague Thorold; and again sought refuge in looking towards the pit—hardly knowing where she was, and not daring again to trust herself with the sight of the group placed immediately opposite to her. Willoughby saw her not; and after a while, her eyes, in despite of the pain she felt, sought him again.—His countenance did not wear expressions of bridal felicity—he was, she thought, paler and thinner than the night before, and on his brow some corrosive sorrow seemed to hang: but Miss Fitz-Hayman, gay and animated, talked to him incessantly; and both she and her mother endeavoured to engross his attention by a flow of conversation.—He listened to them—but Celestina fancied, with more politeness than pleasure—He smiled; but she thought his smiles were the smiles of complaisance, and not of content. Still, however, his appearance in public with them was enough to convince her that his marriage was not far off. Her heart sunk at this sad certainty;

tainty ; for though she had long since endeavoured to wean her mind from the hopes of ever being his, she had still too keen recollections of that time when it was the first wish of both their hearts ; and she was prepossessed with an idea, she hardly knew why, that with Miss Fitz-Hayman, he would be miserable.

That they had been parted by the artifice of Lady Castleworth, she now more than ever suspected. But how Willoughby could be cheated into such a belief ; and if he was, why he should entirely throw off, as a relation, her whom, as the chosen mistress of his heart, he had so fondly cherished, she could not comprehend ; or could she in any way reconcile his conduct with that manly and liberal spirit, which had so eminently marked his character—As she gazed on his face, as on that of a stranger—the husband of Miss Fitz-Hayman—that face which she had been accustomed to contemplate with so much tenderness ; and when she considered that,

lost to her for ever, she now dared no longer look up to *him* as a friend, whom she had once hoped to find, through life, her fond and generous protector, her reflections became too bitter; and had she not feared that her going out would have attracted his eyes towards her; and known that Montague Thorold would have attended her, which she desired to avoid; she would have returned home—for her sufferings were almost insupportable.

She hoped, however, to escape without his seeing her; and shrunk back as much as she could, pretending that her head-ache made the light particularly uneasy to her. Montague Thorold, though knowing too well the real source of her uneasiness, was yet as anxious as she was that Willoughby might not see her; and favoured her concealment as much as he could.

Towards the end of the opera, however, Willoughby, who seemed very weary of his seat, left it to speak to somebody he saw in the pit—Celestina saw him very near the
box

box where she sat; and became so faint that she was afraid she must have sunk from her seat.—But her sufferings still increased, when, a moment afterwards, Mr. Howard, who sat near her, called to him; and got up to speak to him.—In answering his question, Willoughby turned towards him—his eyes immediately fell on Celestina, and Montague Thorold close beside her.—An expression of mingled anger and scorn rose instantly in his countenance; he abruptly broke off his conversation with Mr. Howard, and walked away.—In a moment Celestina saw him rejoin Lady Castlenorth, and Miss Fitz-Hayman.—She saw him affect to enter into conversation with them; but that it was all effort. His eyes once or twice were turned towards her, but immediately withdrawn as if they had met a basilisk; and after a very few minutes, she saw, by his manner, that he complained of the heat of the house, pleaded indisposition, and left them.

Celestina, overwhelmed with sensations

too acute to be borne, began to think the opera never would end; and that Lady Horatia, who saw her distress, had never before had so little compassion. At length it was finished; and as Montague Thorold handed her to the coach, she besought him not to stay supper, if Lady Horatia should ask him; "for I must in that case stay, you know, to entertain you, and really I am so unwell, that it is cruelty to expect it of me." Gratified by the power of obeying her, even when her wishes were contrary to his own; and full of hope that this last struggle, between her lingering love for Willoughby, and the certainty of his having left her for another, would terminate in his own favour, Thorold promised to be wholly governed by her, and took his leave at the door.

"Well, Celestina," said Lady Horatia, as soon as they were alone, "you are now, I think, convinced that Willoughby is, like most other men, capricious, and unfeeling.—What was his conduct to-night, but the
most

most insulting that it was possible to assume; and after receiving a letter too from you, which you confess was couched in the tenderest and most submissive terms, which, as a gentleman, he ought to have answered, had you never had any claim whatever upon him.---I hope, and believe, however, that such conduct will have the happiest effect---that of weaning you for ever from that excessive partiality, which from early prejudice you always appeared to me to think it a merit to cherish. If he quitted you, as he pretended, on account of the doubts raised in his mind, by that sorceress, Lady Castlenorth, why does he not, those doubts being now certainties, own you as his sister, and become your protector as relation? Why, if they are not ascertained, does he poorly shrink from the enquiry, and evade, under such paltry pretences, the engagements which you would surely release him from, if told that he no longer wished to accomplish them."

Celestina tried to speak, but could not
articu-

articulate; and Lady Horatia, whose indignation against Willoughby seemed to increase by indulgence, went on—"Let me conjure you, then, my dear Celestina, to exert that large share of reason, with which you are endowed: and, expelling from your mind all that has passed, try to look forward to happier prospects—to prospects unclouded by doubt, undarkened by the gloomy apprehensions of being despised by the family of your husband, and of being reproached as having embarrassed his fortune. Time and reason, the assiduous tenderness of a man who really adores you, will conquer all remains of respect, and you will, by degrees, learn to think of Willoughby, and of all the events of your early life, with the most perfect indifference.

Celestina thought that was impossible—but altogether unable to enter into the argument, she could only sigh, and in a tremulous voice intreat to be permitted to retire; saying that, in the morning, she should
have

have, she hoped, more resolution, and have got the better of the agitation of her spirits. Sleep, however, refused to visit her—the image of Willoughby, cruel and capricious as he was, incessantly haunted her. Having been long used to study his countenance, she understood all its expressions; and when she had courage to fix her eyes on him, during the opera, no turn of it escaped her: all the comfort she could derive to herself from those observations was, believing that his attention to Miss Firz-Hayman was forced; and that the solicitude with which she herself was avoided, arose, rather from some remains of tenderness, than from total indifference. “Surely,” said she, “if he felt nothing for me, he would not fly from me, but treat me with polite indifference; or, with that candour and openness of heart which used to be so natural to him; he would avow his designs, and give his reasons for them; for he knows, that be his intentions or his motives what they may, I shall never reproach him;

him; but, whatever I may feel for myself, rejoice, if he can find happiness."

Thus, the real affection of her heart for Willoughby, counteracted the effect of that native pride and dignity of soul, which, under other circumstances, would have supported her; and even of his quitting her, without finding that unanswerable reason for it, which was once supposed to exist, she thought rather in sorrow, than in anger.

The morning came, joyless and uninteresting to her—she expected nothing but a repetition of common, irksome occurrences, with the suspense and misery of not hearing from Willoughby.—Lady Horatia's remonstrance—Montague Thorold's silent, but assiduous attendance—company whom she wished not to see—or parties abroad that could afford her no pleasure.

The day, and another and another, wore away, and still no letter from Willoughby arrived—the forlorn hope, which she had till now fondly cherished, that he still re-
tained

tained a lingering preference for her in his heart, now faded away; and an almost certain conviction succeeded, that he not only quitted her for ever, but disclaimed her even as a friend; and gave her up in silent contempt, without either offering her the protection of a relation, or feeling for her the regret which the loss of a pleasant acquaintance would once, she thought, have given him.

She repented she had concealed the letter she had written from Lady Horatia Howard; and while she was conscious that she ought to have no reserves towards her, she felt, that in her present anxious state of suspense, it would be some consolation to talk it over with her friend. But far from soothing her with hope, and attempting to account for the silent neglect of Willoughby, by any means that might palliate its cruelty, Lady Horatia exhorted her, more earnestly than ever, to call off her thoughts from a man, who was considered in every light so unworthy to possess them: and, she

she urged, more earnestly than she had ever yet done, her wishes, that the tender and generous attachment of Montague Thorold might be immediately rewarded.

Though to the necessity of giving herself to another, Celestina could by no means agree, yet she felt that she must either learn to think with more calmness of her eternal separation from Willoughby, or sink under it—for such pain as the undecided wretchedness of the last two or three days had given her, human nature could not long sustain. She promised Lady Horatia that she would endeavour to regain her tranquillity; but besought her, for a day or two, to excuse her from mixing with company; and that in the mean time nothing might be said to Montague Thorold, to give him more encouragement than he had already received. From the looks of Willoughby, when he had seen her with him; and from his present disdainful silence, she supposed that he believed her engaged to him, and either resented her having entered
into

into such an engagement, without consulting him, or still felt some pain in believing she had given herself to another—of which, she could not help owning, there was every appearance, from their being so frequently together; and from the report which had gone forth, which her protectress had not only left uncontradicted, but had rather encouraged. Of Montague Thorold, therefore, she now thought with concern and disquiet, as being partly the cause of the uneasiness she suffered from the certainty which every hour in its flight confirmed, that Willoughby had taken leave of her for ever.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.



